Jaffna Hospital would be Upgraded as a National Hospital in the Near Future

May 24, 2024.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe being welcomed at the Jaffna Hospital.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that the Jaffna Hospital would be upgraded as a national hospital in the near future to enhance and ensure excellent healthcare standards in the Northern Province.

He further noted that the Cabinet has given its approval for the Karapitiya Hospital to be upgraded as a national hospital.

These remarks were made during President Wickremesinghe’s attendance at the inauguration of the Clinical Training and Research Block at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna.

Prof. Sampath Amaratunga, Chairman of the University Grants Commission, emphasized the need for modernizing technology across all science-based faculties in the country, including engineering, medical, science, and agriculture faculties. He highlighted that the current out dated technology hinders progress and adaptation to the modern world.

Furthermore, he noted that Sri Lankan children studying abroad excel not because of the technology they use but because of their knowledge. He emphasized that the integration of new technology could significantly propel the country forward. In response, the President instructed the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Education to collaborate on drafting a proposal for modernizing technology in these faculties and present it for his consideration.

Furthermore, the President highlighted significant developments in the region, notably the construction of the Clinical Training and Research Department building at the Jaffna University—the first such structure to be built in 46 years. With an investment of 942 million rupees, this facility will accommodate 1200 students for undergraduate and postgraduate clinical training, fostering international research collaborations.

The building, spanning 6,000 square meters, comprises multiple lecture halls, clinical skills laboratories and an auditorium. Additionally, it features essential medical facilities such as operating theatres, recovery rooms, cleaning and disposal areas, sterilization units, preparation rooms and storage facilities.

Furthermore, the building houses patient waiting rooms, consultation rooms, and specialized units dedicated to endoscopy, vascular surgery, and mammography. It also accommodates research laboratories, a forensic investigation unit, and a museum for educational purposes.

Under the management of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, supported by the Department of Surgery, and other consultants from the teaching Hospital Jaffna, the Fertility Care Unit is set to offer a wide range of services, encompassing specialist consultations, diagnostic procedures, and treatment facilities.

Meanwhile, the Clinical Trials Unit (CTU) will facilitate clinical research on locally adapted patient-oriented, and cost-effective treatment methods. Additionally, the Clinical Genetics Unit (CGU) will aid in genetic cost- effectiveness, disease management, and preventive measures.

Following the unveiling of the plaque and the inauguration of the new building, the President proceeded to embark on an inspection tour.

“Your request for the establishment of a national hospital in Jaffna has been duly noted. Coincidentally, I have been contemplating the same. Just last week, the Cabinet approved the upgrade of Karapitiya Hospital, and next hospital to be upgraded as a national hospital is going to be Jaffna Hospital.

It is imperative for Jaffna to have an excellent healthcare system, ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare services not only in Colombo and the southern regions but also in the north and central areas. However, our efforts should not stop there. We must also turn our attention to the broader developmental needs of the region. Regarding my frequent visits to Jaffna, allow me to clarify the purpose behind my recent visit.

I felt compelled to address pending matters, particularly the inauguration of two hospitals as requested by both the local community and the Ambassador for the Netherlands during my previous visit.

I have made it a point to visit Jaffna regularly, both as Prime Minister and President, recognizing the pressing need to address the longstanding issues stemming from the conflict in the north and east. The time has come to shift our focus towards development. There are people here who are looking for jobs and the potential for Jaffna for development is great, to use that term.

Jaffna, which has seen limited development in recent years, holds immense potential for growth. While I may not delve into all the issues at hand today, it is

evident that progress has been made in addressing certain challenges, such as land-related issues. However, there remain unresolved matters concerning detainees and other related issues that require our attention. But we still have, to bring this to a close and that revolves around the remaining political issues. Moving forward, we must prioritize reconciliation efforts, address concerns regarding missing persons, and devise mechanisms for compensation and truth and reconciliation. I think this is the time now we have to deal with all these issues.

These are complex issues that demand collective cooperation and engagement from all stakeholders. I have discussed this with the members of Parliament from North and the East, as to what measures we need to take.

Amidst economic challenges, we've been unable to allocate significant funds in recent years. However, we must earmark resources for truth and reconciliation efforts. The government is committed to establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), but we must address the critical issue of judicial powers. We're deliberating whether the TRC should wield judicial authority or if a separate court should be empowered based on TRC recommendations. This decision is paramount, and I've tasked relevant ministers, in consultation with parliamentarians and ambassadors, to draft legislation for parliamentary review.

Moreover, Jaffna holds immense developmental promise, particularly in renewable energy, agriculture, and industries. Harnessing solar and wind power capacities could position Jaffna as a major energy hub. This is the biggest and we have not yet tapped, I mean the potential for the north is not in terms of megawatts but in terms of gigawatts. Additionally, agricultural modernization and industrial zoning initiatives aim to elevate economic prospects in the region.

We aim to cultivate a competitive, high-value export-oriented agriculture sector nationwide, with the Northern Province playing a pivotal role. The province's farmers possess the requisite skills for this endeavor, which promises to significantly enhance both individual and provincial incomes.

In the realm of industry, discussions are underway to establish the inaugural investment zone in Kankasanthurai, followed by industrial parks in Paranthan and Mankulam. Collaborative efforts with India are also underway to develop Trincomalee.

Furthermore, we're exploring tourism prospects in the north, anticipating transformative changes with forthcoming land connectivity, particularly benefiting Jaffna. These initiatives hold the potential to position the Northern Province as a key economic hub of Sri Lanka.

During our visit, we witnessed captivating dance performances by students from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Jaffna, most of who are under 21 years of age, born in 2002 or 2003.

These individuals belong to Generation Z and are deeply invested in shaping their own futures. It's incumbent upon us to facilitate their aspirations, which underscores our legislative efforts aimed at propelling rapid development within a new economic paradigm".

Minister Douglas Devananda said, "For over a decade, since 2003, the Jaffna University Faculty of Medicine Students' Union has tirelessly advocated for the construction of this building. Today, we stand here witnessing the fulfilment of that long-standing request. Furthermore, swift actions have been taken to address other pressing needs, including those of the Faculty of Agriculture.

During a critical period when the nation grappled with unrest, it was President Ranil Wickremesinghe who stepped forward to assume leadership, demonstrating unparalleled commitment. Today, we witness a multitude of developmental endeavors underway across the country.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe, with his visionary leadership, has transformed a non-functional vehicle into a vehicle fit for travel, symbolizing his capability to navigate the challenges ahead. His unwavering dedication inspires confidence, as evidenced by his track record of tangible achievements."

Member of Parliament Dharmalingam Siddharthan, said, "In a remarkably short span of two years since assuming office, President Ranil Wickremesinghe has spearheaded numerous initiatives for the advancement of the Northern Province. The inauguration of this building for the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Jaffna is yet another testament to his commitment to Northern development. His decisive actions, particularly concerning sensitive issues like the release of lands, reflect his deep concern for the welfare of the northern population. Even as the Prime Minister, he played a pivotal role in driving development efforts in both the

northern and eastern provinces.”

Member of Parliament M. A. Sumanthiran, PC said, “President, I extend my sincere gratitude for granting me the opportunity to address this esteemed gathering on behalf of the people of Jaffna. I also personally thank you for gracing us with your presence here.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe has exhibited an unwavering commitment to the progress of not only the North but also the East, dating back to his tenure as Prime Minister. The inauguration of the Faculty of Medicine building at the Jaffna University is a milestone event transpiring today and underscores not just an investment in the North but also a significant contribution to the nation’s advancement. I firmly believe that this institution will evolve into a hub for scientific innovation in Sri Lanka’s future.

As emphasized by previous speakers in this event, the President has accorded special consideration to the development of the Jaffna district and its residents. It is possible that challenges in the North may have impeded your journey in 2005, a fact that I believe is now regretfully acknowledged by the people of the region.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Jaffna for realizing this monumental project. The dividends of this investment are bound to be substantial. We extend a warm welcome to the President for gracing the Jaffna district with his presence, and we commend him for his dedicated efforts in advancing the interests of the North during this visit.”

Governor of the Northern Province P. S. M. Charles, said, “It is with immense pride that I announce the completion of the Clinical Training and Research Department of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Jaffna, marking a significant milestone after 46 years.

In March of last year, I requested the President’s presence for the inauguration of this building. He assured me of his attendance in May, and true to his word, he is here with us today.”

Unveiling of the plaque and the inauguration of the new building.

Unveiling of the plaque of the Regional Collaborating Center.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe with Douglas Devananda, Minister of Fisheries and Governor of the Northern Province P. S. M. Charles.