

# **President Wickremesinghe Commemorates Joseph Fraser Ninewells Hospital's Centenary Anniversary**

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President Ranil Wickremesinghe delivered a compelling address during the commemoration of Joseph Fraser Ninewells Hospital's centennial anniversary at the hospital premises underscoring the crucial importance of maintaining Sri Lankan healthcare facilities at international standards, positioning the nation as a premier hub for medical tourism. The President emphasized the critical need to address the shortage of medical professionals in

Sri Lanka. He shared insights into the government's plans to bolster medical education in the country, ensuring a sustainable supply of doctors.

In his address, at the centenary commemoration of Joseph Fraser Ninewells Hospital, President Wickremesinghe paid tribute to the legacy of Joseph Fraser, a Scottish planter who played a pivotal role in Sri Lanka's tea industry during its formative years. Notably, Fraser and his wife chose to leave behind a lasting memorial to Sri Lanka, the Joseph Fraser Ninewells Hospital, showcasing their commitment to the country's development.

President Wickremesinghe acknowledged the hospital's origins in an underdeveloped region and its significant growth over the years. He praised the institution's high standards and highlighted its distinction as a well-regarded healthcare facility for women, a rarity in Sri Lanka.

The President commended Sumal Perera, Chairman Access Group of Companies and Manilal Fernando, distinguished figures in the Sri Lankan healthcare sector, for their contributions and emphasized the importance of maintaining the institution's exemplary standards.

President Wickremesinghe reiterated the need for Sri Lanka to excel in healthcare to attract medical tourists and bolster the nation's healthcare sector. He emphasized the necessity of restructuring healthcare policies and increasing the number of medical colleges to address the shortage of doctors. The President further acknowledged the challenges posed by the shortage of doctors and stressed the importance of developing an effective solution. He announced plans to establish the first non-government medical faculty in Sri Lanka, a significant step towards expanding medical education opportunities. Furthermore, President Wickremesinghe highlighted the allocation of the South Asian Institute of Technology and Medicine (SAITM) to the Moratuwa University, aiming to create more medical education institutions. He expressed hope that the government would support the establishment of additional medical colleges and universities, ensuring that Sri Lanka can produce more doctors. The President recognized that while some doctors may choose to practice abroad, increasing the overall number of medical professionals in the country is essential. He affirmed that expanding medical education is a critical strategy to meet this challenge. In an inspiring declaration, President Wickremesinghe underscored Sri Lanka's transition from an aid-receiving country to a donor nation, showcasing the country's progress and commitment to addressing its healthcare needs independently.

"Indeed, I have resolved that Sri Lanka shall not merely remain a beneficiary of aid; instead, we aspire to evolve into a nation that contributes aid to others. We have extended our support by sending our doctors to the United Kingdom, where these dedicated expertise

plays an indispensable role in sustaining their healthcare system. Collaboratively, with Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India, we exert significant influence over the healthcare infrastructure in the UK, a testament to the high calibre of our professionals.

I find myself in a situation similar to that of a doctor in recent times. I am tasked with the responsibility of tending to a patient who is teetering on the brink of critical condition, and I am steadfastly committed to nursing them back to health. If circumstances permitted, I would readily entrust this patient to the care of Joseph Fraser. Regrettably, circumstances necessitate that I retain oversight of the patient's care within the treasury".

Furthermore, we have diligently devised a novel approach that fosters synergy between the private and public sectors, ensuring that they can effectively collaborate for the greater good.

The President's remarks underscore the government's determination to address the healthcare workforce shortage in Sri Lanka, thereby ensuring the nation's healthcare system remains robust and accessible.

The President also shared insights into efforts to create a hybrid healthcare system that combines public and private healthcare services while exploring the potential of health insurance.

President Wickremesinghe concluded by highlighting the importance of Sri Lanka's private sector in propelling the country's growth and development. He invoked Joseph Fraser's legacy as an example of an individual who, through perseverance and dedication, made a significant contribution to Sri Lanka's progress.

Meanwhile, Manilal Fernando, Management Trustee of Joseph Fraser Hospital, commended President Ranil Wickremesinghe's unwavering dedication to addressing the economic challenges facing Sri Lanka. He praised the President's bold leadership in steering the country through unprecedented crisis situations, particularly highlighting his commitment to the debt restructuring process. During his speech at the event, Fernando applauded President Wickremesinghe's leadership, emphasizing the critical role the President has played in navigating the nation through a period of economic uncertainty and challenges.

Fernando's remarks echoed sentiments shared by many who recognize President Wickremesinghe's resolute commitment to resolving the nation's debt issues and stabilizing the economy. His words serve as a testament to the collective effort and determination of

Sri Lanka's leadership in addressing the complex issues facing the nation.

A commemorative stamp in honour of Joseph Fraser Ninewells Hospital's centenary anniversary was ceremoniously unveiled by dignitaries including Postmaster General T. Sathkumara, along with two Deputy Postmasters. The inaugural stamp was presented to the President, signifying a momentous occasion in commemorative stamp history.

The commemoration ceremony was attended by Sumal Perera Chairman, Access Group of Companies, Dr. Manil Fernando Chairman Board of Trustees, Joseph Fraser Ninewells, Theo Fernando Managing Director Ninewells Hospital, Thomas Daetwyler Trustee Joseph Fraser Ninewells, Prof. Hemantha Senanayake Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist, dignitaries, healthcare professionals and esteemed guests, celebrating a century of service and progress at Joseph Fraser Ninewells Hospital.