

**THE PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH AT THE INAUGURATION OF
SAIFEE HOSPITAL
MUMBAI, JUNE 4, 2005**

The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, inaugurated the Saifee Hospital at Mumbai on June 4, 2005. Following is the Text of the PM's speech –

“It is a doubly blessed day for me. We have gathered here to inaugurate yet another noble act by the Dawoodi Bohra community in the service of mankind by the inauguration of this grand hospital and what a coincidence that this event coincides with the 94th birthday of Syedna Dr. Mohammad Burhanuddin Sahib. That this inauguration is taking place on such an auspicious day. It in itself speaks about the glorious future of this great institution that this Saifee hospital has become. My first words are words of gratitude to all of you for giving me the opportunity to inaugurate this magnificent hospital. When I look at the growth of Indian civilisation through the centuries, I am reminded of a couplet from Dr. Mohammad Iqbal when he compared our civilisation with the civilisations elsewhere, he said “ मिट गए मिस्र, यूनान और रोमां, लेकिन कायम है अब तक नामो-निशां हमार, कुछ बात है कि हस्ती मिटती नहीं हमारी, सदियों रहा है दुश्मन, दौरे जमां हमार”।

That our civilisation has been a living civilisation of centuries and thousands of years which is because this civilisation has been blessed by numerous saints, philosophers who have showed us the way and the Daowoodi Bohra community in own old times has been a pace setter in emphasising the value of unity in diversity in this great ancient land of India. And therefore, I am delighted that I am in your midst today. I just had a brief tour of the hospital premises and I see before my eyes a world class healthcare facilities, another landmark in this commercial capital of India that Mumbai is. I have no doubt that the Saifee hospital will address the growing demand for state-of-the-art humane but efficient healthcare, as a multi speciality tertiary hospital.

It is not only the modernity and excellence of this hospital that is so impressive. I am truly touched by the philanthropic spirit of Syedna Sahib and the Daowoodi Bohra community that stands before us today in the form of bricks and mortar in the service of the people of this great metropolitan town that Mumbai is. It is highly creditable that this project is primarily financed by donations and through charity. Indeed, it is more so, because the doors of this hospital are open to all and because healthcare will be provided to those who need it, not merely to those who can afford it. And for this magnificent hospital, I pay tribute to the Late Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin Saheb in whose memory we are dedicating

this hospital today. His spirit of humanism and compassion have been inherited by Syedna Dr. Mohammad Burhannuddin Saheb who is respected all over the world for his deep religiosity and philanthropy. This hospital is a symbol of these fine qualities of head and heart that endear Dr. Syedna to so many people all over the world. Once again, on this auspicious day, I wish Syedna Mohammad Burhannuddin Saheb, I thank him for the establishment of this hospital and I greet him on behalf of the entire Indian nation on this auspicious occasion of his birthday.

Specialist hospitals must meet the needs of all segments of our society. They must respond to the felt needs of the community at the grassroot level. Medical and para medical personnel must be imbued with the commitment to ensuring the welfare of the community they serve. It is therefore very satisfying that the Saifee hospital is inspired by a larger commitment to humanity. Premier tertiary level institutions such as this magnificent hospital must be the role models for medical institutions at other levels. This is particularly so when the community at large reposes great trust and faith in charitable hospitals that are managed by the community organisation. Experience has shown that neither government-run hospitals nor private corporate hospitals have succeeded in fully addressing the healthcare needs of our people. On the other hand, charitable institutions have repeatedly demonstrated their capacity to care irrespective of which community is involved. It is my firm belief that all institutions that serve the cause of God by serving the needy first usually end up serving all of the society best. I shall like to clarify that I do not oppose the involvement of the private sector in healthcare. On the contrary, in a large and diverse country such as India, involving the private sector in healthcare is inevitable and indeed desirable. However, our effort must be to guard against inadvertently creating two worlds separated by an insurmountable distance – a world of high class medical care for a privileged few, and a larger world of neglect of the interests of many. It is incumbent for State and local Governments to show a renewed commitment to public health and to public healthcare institutions. Therefore, I am convinced that the public sector must remain an integral part of the healthcare sector. But there is enormous scope for involvement of the community and charitable associations and this hospital is a shining example of that.

Healthcare is an essential part of our Government's commitment to our people. Not long ago, I launched the National Rural Health Mission as part of our pledge to complete what Jawaharlal Nehru described as the 'unfinished agenda of our freedom movement. Closing the health gap among our people is a matter of top priority, if we are to succeed even in partial measure in building a genuinely free, fair and equitable society. This hospital as I said, will make a magnificent contribute to realising

this national ideal. Today, our country stands at a peculiar crossroad of history. Not only are we burdened with communicable diseases like tuberculosis and malaria – the diseases of the past but we are also increasingly afflicted with lifestyle ailments, such as diabetes, hypertension and coronary artery disease, cancer – the diseases of our future. We must therefore all work together to devise imaginative ways and means to tackle both sects of maladies simultaneously. This is of course not an easy task when there are innumerable contenders for limited financial resources. And it is in this context that today's function derives its great significance. I see the proactive role of charitable institutions and community organisations as cause of hope. Very simply, without the support of all segments of the society, it will not be possible for the state alone to bridge the healthcare gap that is so visible in our country. I therefore compliment the Saifee Hospital Trust and the members of the Dawoodi Bohra Community for their yeoman public service. Indeed, this is a well deserved reputation that this noble community has earned over the centuries. The fact that you are giving back so much to the wider community is not only a credit to our Dawoodi Bohra brethren and sisters, it is also a testimony to the success of the experiment that is the building of modern India, an inclusive society where people of all religions can live together as brothers and sisters, as equal partners in processes of development. Therefore, when I see ventures such as this magnificent hospital and I see its success, it gives me great hope for the future of our vast and ancient land. I therefore, conclude my speech by complimenting the Saifee Trust and all those associated with this hospital on this very happy and auspicious day. I wish this hospital and the members of the Bohra community all success in the noble task that you are engaged in. And as I said, for me it is a doubly blessed day because today happens to be the 94th birthday of Syedna Dr. Mohammad Burhannuddin Saheb. To him I pay my respects by quoting another couplet ‘ तुम जिंदा रहो हज़ार बरस, हर बरस के दिन हों पचास हज़ार ।’ ”
