**High Commissioner Dr. Rajesh Ranjan’s speech on the occasion of Closing Ceremony of Botswana Cataract Blindness Campaign on 21.6.2019 at Scottish Livingstone Hospital, Molepolole**

* **Hon. Dr. Tlamelo Mmatli, MP, Molepolole South**
* **Mr. Moses Keetile, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Health and Wellness of the Republic of Botswana**
* **Ms. Berenice Berman Mosime, District Commissioner for Kweneng**
* **Kgosi Mhaladi**
* **Dr. Nikung, Head of Dr. Shroff’s Team and other team members**
* **Ms. Alice Lehasa from National Eye Health Coordinator**
* **Dr. Freddy Mbumba**
* **Dr. Malcom**
* **Dr. K S Bose**
* **Protocol observed**
* **Media personnel**
* **Ladies and Gentlemen**

**Good Morning and Dumela,**

1. **I am delighted today to be** with you all on the occasion of closing ceremony of Botswana Cataract Blindness Campaign. I would like to **congratulate the Ministry of Health and Wellness** of the Republic of Botswana and **Dr. Shroff’s Charity Eye Hospital** from India for **supporting Cataract Blindness Campaign**.

2. As we know that **Blindness impacts quality of life**. Visually impaired people are poorer in terms of assets, self-rated wealth and monthly expenditure and are less likely to engage in productive activities. **Cataract is the most common cause of blindness** and has a relatively simple and quick surgery. The first 3 causes of blindness and visual impairment are : Cataract 41% ; Glaucoma 23% and Corneal Scar 14%.

3. I would like to **congratulate Dr. Shroff’s Charity Eye Hospital** for conducting **more than 6000 cataract surgery** from 2016 to 2019 which is commendable.

4. I would like to mention that the **Indian community in Botswana** has been very **supportive of the eye campaign** as active in socio-welfare sector. Sathya Sai Centre of Gaborone is **conducting Free Eye Clinic every Sunday** for the past 10 years. They also provide spectacles.

5. Botswana is ideally suited for an intervention as it has the political will to **improve the health of the nation**; Excellent primary **health care system** and has pre-identified patients with cataract on registry.

6. **Botswana has also the infrastructure available including operating theatres with equipment** needed for high volume surgical expeditions. The country needs to develop capacity through training along with the expeditions to cater to ongoing needs and create **a long term collaboration** with organizations like Dr. Shroff’s Charity Eye Hospital to improve eye-care delivery.

7. **India has a long standing close and multifaceted relationship with Botswana**. India and Botswana have a very strong and unique friendship. Our mutually beneficial partnership, driven by our common interests, is a perfect example of South-South Cooperation.

8. Recently Prime Minister of India **Shri Narendra Modi has enunciated the 10 Guiding Principles for India’s Engagement with Africa which focused on African priorities,** capacity building, skill development, agriculture, **Health,** trade, peacekeeping, security, youth development and representative & democratic global order in the global institution for India and Africa.

9. Our development partnership with Botswana is guided by the priorities of Botswana and one of the important aspect of our cooperation is people to people contact. The main aspect of cooperation is capacity building which **focuses to enhance the local capacity and local opportunities as possible for Botswanan talents and skills** in a wide range of specialized areas.

10. **Possible areas where we could collaborate in improving eye health** in Botswana:

i. **Training for** Ophthalmologists and paramedics in modern eye surgery

ii. **Supply of equipment and maintenance**. India is the world’s best supplier of consumables and equipment at affordable rates.

11. **In the past few years, our co-operation has intensified in all spheres**, including skill development, trade, health and agriculture. The realization of the full potential of bilateral cooperation is not just in our shared interests but also a key to ensuring peace, security and prosperity for the world in the 21st century.

12. India’s cooperation with Botswana is based on **“HEALTH”** where H stands of Healthcare Cooperation, E for Economic cooperation & Experience sharing, A for Alternate Energy, L for Literature and Culture, T for Trade & Investment, Transfer of Technology and H for Human Resource Development.

**Thank You All**

**Pula**