

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



**Speech by
His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom
at the inauguration of the
3rd Asia Pacific Congress on Craniofacial Surgery and
Distraction Osteogenesis**

*Dharubaaruge, Male'
Tuesday, 1 May 2007*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Professor U. S. Nayak, Organising Chairman, Professor S. M. Balaji, Organising Secretary, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen;

It gives me great pleasure to inaugurate the 3rd Asia Pacific Congress on Craniofacial Surgery and Distraction Osteogenesis. I wish to thank Prof Nayak, Prof Balaji, and Prof Lim K. Cheung, for inviting me to this ceremony.

May I extend a very warm welcome to all the distinguished participants, and hope that your stay in the Maldives will be fruitful and enjoyable.

I thank Prof Nayak and all the Congress organisers for the memento that was presented to me a short while ago. May I also thank Prof Balaji for presenting me with a copy of the official Book of Transactions.

I am happy to note that the Asia Pacific Congress on Craniofacial Surgery and Distraction Osteogenesis is being held in the Maldives for a second successive time. I recall with much pleasure the success of the Second Congress, which was held in Bandos Island Resort in 2004.

Distinguished Participants:

Craniofacial distraction osteogenesis is today a highly refined art and the techniques are now used to correct or treat numerous conditions. Lengthening bones or creating bone growth has been employed by orthopaedic surgeons over the past century. However, the use of this technique to correct facial skeletal problems or craniofacial deformities has only been used for just over a decade.

I understand that the participants of this Congress are indeed the cream of craniofacial surgery, and many of you are among the pioneers of this exciting new area of maxillofacial surgery.

The importance of this Congress is, therefore, clearly evident. I have no doubt that the deliberations of this Congress will lead to further advancements in craniofacial surgery, that would pave the way for improved and cost-effective use of craniofacial distraction osteogenesis on needy patients across the world.

Distinguished Participants:

I believe that it is a responsibility of all governments and professionals to strive to improve the quality of life of the people. It is the ability to help people that drives us. Improving the quality of life of patients and bringing a smile to their faces is indeed a great reward.

It is therefore, crucial for all professionals to be unrelenting in their pursuit of advancement and progress in their field. I am confident that craniofacial surgery will soon be available throughout the world, and benefit people both young and old from all walks of life. That should be the common goal.

Distinguished Participants:

The pursuit of improved health care standards and facilities has been a top priority of my Government. I am proud to say that the Maldives has made tremendous progress in this area over the years.

In 1978, when I took over as President, there was little or no infrastructure in the country; and the people were not receiving an adequate level of healthcare and education.

In 1978, there was only one hospital and fourteen health centres in the country, but now there are 20 hospitals across the country, as well as 85 health centres in the atolls.

The country's infant mortality was then 120, but today it is 14; under-five mortality was 180 but today it is 18. The life expectancy at birth was then

50, now it is 73. We have achieved universal coverage in immunization for major vaccine-preventable diseases.

I take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Health, Mr. Ilyas Ibrahim, and senior officials and staff of the Ministry of Health for their dedicated efforts to promote and advance healthcare services in the Maldives. I wish to also pay tribute to all former health ministers for their leadership in implementing the country's health policies over the years. We would not have achieved such height without the support and dedication of a vast network of healthcare professionals across the country. I take great pleasure therefore in thanking all the hardworking doctors and nurses in the Maldives, as well as the staff of private healthcare institutions, non governmental organisations and everyone involved in our health sector.

Distinguished Participants:

I am confident that the 3rd Asia Pacific Congress on Craniofacial Distraction Osteogenesis is going to be the most successful so far. I hope that the Maldives will be an enabling environment for your important deliberations. I also hope that you will find time out of your busy schedules to savour our warm hospitality.

Thank you