

July 19th 2019

**First Anniversary of the Modern Medical Centre
and Renewal at 40 Exercise**

Introduction

Last Friday July 12th 2019, the Ministry of Health marked the first anniversary of the Modern Medical Diagnostic Hospital, located in the village of Chile in the Georgetown area. The Diagnostic Hospital represents a fundamental expansion of high quality health services in the State. When coupled with the Georgetown Smart Hospital, the MMDC will provide a number of new medical services, which will supplement those being offered at the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital in Kingstown.

When the ULP began construction of this facility, the NDP went crazy. They said that the diagnostic hospital was located in the wrong area, that it was too close to the La Soufriere volcano, and too far from the urban areas, particularly the villages around Kingstown. Clearly, the NDP did not understand the forward thrust of the ULP administration, when it comes to the delivery of health care for our people.

There is no doubt that the delivery of health, wellness and environmental services has improved significantly, over the last fifteen years. The ULP administration has repaired and renovated over 32 clinics in the State, built and equipped seven brand new clinics, and opened three polyclinics at Stubbs, Mesopotamia and Buccament.

The MMDC

In the 12 months since the Modern Medical Diagnostic Centre became operational, some interesting and astounding statistics have emerged. Some ten thousand patients attended the facility and just over 500 surgical procedures have been performed. This included a lifesaving procedure on a teenager who had a ruptured ectopic pregnancy.

Some 2,022 patients visited the outpatient specialist clinic and the pharmacy department dispensed 10,227 drugs and medication to 5,333 patients within the Georgetown medical district. The MMDC facilitated fifteen birthing emergency deliveries, while the laboratory conducted a staggering 16,405 tests, 3612 x-rays and 5012 ultrasound procedures.

The emergency unit treated a total of 9,284 patients, while 20 patients received chemotherapy treatment, with six of these completing the treatment successfully.

At the moment 24 patients receive dialysis two or three times a week for kidney failure. The Modern Medical Diagnostic Centre is truly a collaborative effort between the country's health and medical professionals, the various health departments and the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

All this is aimed at improving the quality and quantity of health services provided for Vincentians, so as to increase the level of medical care, and reduce costs. Statistics are not readily available, but here and there, Vincentians have testified as to how much money they have saved, by using the services at the Modern Medical Diagnostic Centre in Georgetown.

This institution will continue to provide top quality health services, as the professionals there, will lift their game, to ensure that the MMDC becomes the centre of excellence, as far as health matters is concerned.

Renewal at 40

The 1763 Treaty of Paris represented French recognition of British sovereignty over Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The indigenous Kalinago and Garifuna challenged that colonial imposition over the course of two wars, fought across 28 years, between 1769 and 1797. The Garifuna were ultimately defeated, and for the next 182 years following the indigenous genocide that ended the so-called "Second Carib War," Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was undoubtedly a non-independent colonial territory.

We reacquired our independence in 1979, in the wake of a volcanic eruption and in the face of local opposition that considered Vincentians "safe as sardines" in a colonial embrace that was at once suffocating and indifferent. In the intervening years, we have proven, time and again, that the resistance, resilience, courage and creativity of the Vincentian people are second to none. We are not better than anybody, but nobody is better than us.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the reacquisition of Vincentian independence. Our country – and the world – has changed fundamentally over that period. As we prepare to enter our fifth decade of post-independence development, it is an appropriate time to reflect upon the path we have trod, celebrate our accomplishments, and refresh ourselves for the next stage of our independence journey.

Accordingly, in 2019, the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will launch "Renewal@40," a wide-ranging and multifaceted programme of reflection and reinvention that ranges from the cultural to the infrastructural. Spread across the various ministries are a number of Renewal @40 initiatives, which include:

1. School and LRC refurbishment \$6m
2. Kingstown Clean-up \$1.7m
3. Fort Charlotte and Bridge rehabilitation \$872,600
4. Heritage Square rehabilitation \$450,000
5. Development of Joseph Chatoyer National Park \$436,000
6. Community Centre refurbishment \$428,000
7. Renewal @40 Unit and programmes \$400,000
8. History of Saint Vincent & the Grenadines \$75,000
9. Peace Memorial Hall rehabilitation \$71,200
10. Garifuna and Diaspora homecoming event \$65,000

The responsibility for coordinating the diverse Renewal @40 activities will be reposed in a special unit, imbued with crosscutting organisational reach and authority. This unit, and its lead Coordinator, will be tasked with driving the implementation of Renewal @40 policies and programmes. While, ideally, as many programmes as possible will culminate on or around our October 2019 Independence celebrations, not all Renewal @40 initiatives are envisaged as one-year, one-off activities. Renewal is a process, not an occasion. As such, Renewal @40 activities will necessarily extend beyond the 2019 calendar year.

Nonetheless we expect the 40th Anniversary to be the catalyst for a cleaner, better organized Kingstown; a general refreshing of public infrastructure; a reengagement with our Diasporas; a celebration of our outstanding citizens; and a renewed appreciation of our unique history and culture.

The renewal @40 exercise will be launched this Saturday July 20th, 2019, at a rally schedule to be held at the Community College at Calliaqua, from 6pm. Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves will deliver the feature address at this event.