

44 doctors sent abroad for training

WHY THE TRAINING?

President says move will help the country cut of high cost of medical tourism currently standing at sh316b annually

By David Lumu

The Government has sent 45 doctors to India and another to Canada for specialised training in gynaecology; ear, nose and throat, neurosurgery, kidney and joint surgery.

President Yoweri Museveni flagged off the 44 doctors on Wednesday at State House, Entebbe.

"Progress in the health sector is due to the minimum intervention of the National Resistance Movement government. It has promoted a successful immunisation programme. In the past, 96,000 children used to die from immunisable diseases. We have managed to prevent 15 diseases in Uganda today," a statement issued by State House yesterday quoted Museveni.

The flagging-off function was attended by health state minister Sarah Opendi and Prof. Moses Galukande, the head of surgery at Makerere University School of Medicine, who led the doctors.

The move to take doctors for specialised training in India has come at a time when the country is grappling with medical tourism effects. A report issued by the East African Community in 2014, indicated that the region loses sh446b annually in medical tourism, especially trips to India and the United Kingdom, for non-communicable disease treatment.

However, according to Museveni, the medical tourism cost for Uganda alone is at sh316b.

To avert this costing medical tourism, State House said Museveni has emphasised the need for Uganda to advance in medical technology.

"He revealed that Uganda spends \$88m (about sh316b) annually on foreign medical travel. He, therefore, tasked the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders with working hard and solve that challenge. He urged medical officers to prioritise in the course of their work, noting that we need to specialise in modern medical



Museveni handing the Uganda flag to doctors heading to India and Canada for specialised training. Photo by PPU

IMPORTANT TO NOTE

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of transformation to middle-income status," the statement quotes Galukande. He also revealed that plans are underway to establish a centre to provide timely platform for training and concurrently offer services that are desired by many.

The medical officers are expected to return to Uganda to practise the new skills and train

many others in the profession. Galukande also said they are fully committed to creating a platform to increase and improve access to healthcare in the country.

Cutting costs

Galukande added that the locally-based centre for the training of medical officers would contribute to the mitigation of economic challenges by stemming the tide of going abroad for training at a cost of \$8,000 (sh28m) per person per month.

According to Galukande, a recent survey conducted by Ugandan doctors indicates that 10.6% of the population surveyed is in dire need of medical surgical consultations, while 34% of deaths in the surveyed households were caused by treatable surgical conditions.