

Orthodox Church to set up international cancer centre at Parumala

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WITH a mission to alleviate the sufferings of the disease-stricken, especially poor, the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church has drawn the blueprint for an ambitious, international cancer centre at Parumala, at an outlay of Rs 100 crore. The project is expected to be completed in three years time.

Catholicos Baselios Mar Thoma Didymos-I will lay the foundation stone for the St Gregorius International Cancer Centre at 3.30 pm on August 24, in the presence of all metropolitans of the denomination.

The bishops are slated to arrive for a Synod meet at Parumala, which will commence after the foundation stone-laying ceremony.

Catholicos-designate Paulose Mar Milithios and project chief executive officer Fr Alexander Koodarathil told newsmen that the Church was all set to enrich its service to society and the poor, by following the path of the healing ministry espoused by Christ.

The rising incidence of cancer cases has veered around the point that a modern research and treatment centre is needed in Central Travancore, he said.

The already existing Parumala Hospital has earned a place of repute as a centre of excellence in heartcare, in addition to other wings. Not less than 40 percent of the cases attended by the hospital are serviced totally free, benefiting the poor in the region immensely, said hospital managing committee members Biju Oommen, Shaji Abraham and Varghese K Thomas, who were pres-

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ent at the news conference.

Mar Milithios said that the idea of setting up a cancer care centre was borne out of the reality that the facilities for cancer diagnosis and treatment in the state were limited and at least 70 percent of the cases are detected only at a secondary stage.

Even when the incidence of cancer cases has a multiplier effect, early detection and possible saving of lives is not happening. The relevance of the proposed project also owes to the fact that dependents and relatives are more or less helpless and becomes financially-drained and desperate when a member of the family gets afflicted with any type of cancer.

The centre will have 17 departments, including radiotherapy, nuclear medicine, palliative care and hospice.

International expertise for the successful running of the project through necessary training and other back-up will be ensured by collaborating institutions such as the premier Westchester Medical University, New York, M D Anderson Hospital, Houston, which is the third largest of its kind in the world, Bailer College of Medicine, Chicago, etc.

Scores of experts of international repute have evinced keen interest in the project and promised all help, he said. The centre will come up on eight floors, adjacent to the existing hospital at Parumala.

CEO Fr Alexander Koodarathil said that sanction had been accorded by the Centre, after a rigorous screening of track-record, including accounts and help accorded to the poor sections of the society, for a 35 AC licence.

It would facilitate corporate entities to advance up to 5 percent of their total annual income, under the mandatory head of corporate social responsibility (CSR), for philanthropic and social service projects.

Lot of contributions are expected from community members also, especially those affluent lot in the US and Gulf sectors. Already, nearly 40 percent of the total outlay have been assured.

The proposed project is, in fact, an extension of an ongoing Cancer Control Project from December last year, under the Oncology department of the existing Parumala hospital. Cancer detection camp is being held in the hospital on every Saturdays and around 60-70 people are attending it, said Biju Oommen.

Awareness sessions are also being held in schools and colleges in the belt. Another notable mission of the department is MOPS, a door-to-door campaign and care service within the jurisdiction of eight adjoining grama panchayats of the hospital, wherever there are cancer-affected households. Church PRO P C Elias was also present at the news conference.