

Ministry moves to improve eye-care services

By **DAILY NEWS**
Reporter

THE Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has developed the second National Eye Care Strategic Plan under which eye care services are set for significant improvement countrywide.

Health Minister, Dr Seif Rashid, launching a state-of-the-art Eye Unit at Shree Hindu Mandal Hospital in Dar es Salaam yesterday, said the

envisaged improvement under the strategic plan to be undertaken from 2011 to 2016 would contribute towards the realisation of the Global Vision 2020, the right to sight initiative.

"In this endeavour, we look forward to working with all stakeholders. My ministry and I therefore appreciate this initiative by Shree Hindu Mandal Hospital," said Dr Rashid.

Opening of the eye centre,

which is expected to be the best in the country, has been made possible following contributions given by Dr Kanubhai K.C Babla of Mombasa, Kenya.

"We are grateful to him because the donation has contributed to national efforts to prevent blindness. It is my sincere hope that the service provision at this newly established eye unit will be affordable and accessible to the Tanzania community at

large," the minister said.

According to him, establishment of the unit would further enhance the capacity to manage simple and complicated eye diseases. He pointed out that the facility would also assist the ministry towards the attainment of its second national eye care strategic plan.

"From my ministry's point of view, this is an excellent example of private-public partnership being implement-

ed on the ground by providing benefits to the patient," Dr Rashid said. According to the health statistics, eye conditions were among top ten diseases in Tanzania. Since a population-based blindness survey was yet to be conducted, the actual national level of blindness prevalence was not known.

However, the minister said, WHO estimated the prevalence of blindness in developing countries to range

from 0.5 per cent to 1 per cent. He said such estimates might not reflect the true picture as a survey conducted in a trachoma endemic district in Tanzania in the year 2008 revealed a prevalence of 3.5 per cent.

Dr Rashid further said that, according to WHO, the leading causes of blindness in the country were cataract (50 per cent), corneal blindness (20 per cent) and glaucoma (10 per cent).