

'Eye check-up must in 30s'

Staff Reporter

RAJAHMUNDY: Renowned ophthalmologist V.K. Raju has said blindness is preventable but concerted effort is needed to eliminate the risk.

Dr. Raju, who hails from Rajahmundry, came to his native place on Monday, which is his 60th visit to India after he went to the U.S. in 1976. He has received the American Academy of Ophthalmology Award—"Outstanding Humanitarian Service" for his contributions to the medical profession and for his efforts to prevent blindness in rural India. He also received the West Virginia University International Service Award in 1995.

Accessibility, affordability make all the difference in preventing blindness, says ophthalmologist

Dr. Raju performs surgeries during his ten-day visit to his Goutami Eye Institute.

"I am a non-relinquished Indian," said the doctor with a smile in an interview to *The Hindu*. He has been living in Morgantown since 1976.

The founder chairman of Goutami Tertiary Eye Care Centre, Dr. Raju said it is very important for people crossing 35 years of age to go for eye check up be-

cause that is the age from which glaucoma starts affecting eyes. He says diagnosis is important in ophthalmology and in India "accessibility and affordability" are the two important things to prevent blindness from infants to octogenarians.

"In the West people are progressive not because of tremendous scientific advancement or sophisticated equipment but because they stick to fundamentals such as hygiene, garbage collection, water supply and power.

He says that the World Health Organisation has already warned that India is going to have 70 million diabetics, which will lead to increase in number of eye diseases.

Rare surgery conducted

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A rare surgery was done to a nine-year-old boy Palivela Prasanna Kumar, born with congenital Glaucoma. He lost vision in his right eye few years ago unnoticed by himself and his parents. Finally, after going to many Ophthalmologists they landed in Goutami Eye Institute and Doctor K. Madhavi diagnosed the child as having uncontrolled Glaucoma and opted for 'Ahmed Valve Implantation' to control the intraocular pressure and there by saving



the optic nerve. Doctor Madhavi is said to be the only surgeon known for doing such implants in the State.

According to Mr. K. Madhu, Chairman of the hospital, the parents of Prasanna Kumar, the parents first sought local ophthalmologist advice, and asked them to go to Hyderabad for further treatment. The father, P. Phillip Raju working as an assistant to a Pasteur, couldn't bear the expenses. Gouthami Eye Institute did at the procedure costing about Rs.20,000 free of cost. The object of the Procter is to safe guard the limited vision that the child has in one eye and there by preventing to go blind for rest of his life.