

TEXT OF A SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH,
MR. A.J. BRAGA, AT THE OPENING OF THE
INSTITUTE OF HEALTH, OUTRAM ROAD, AT
6 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 1958

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Singapore is already one of Asia's healthiest cities, and it is our determination that it ~~shall~~ remain so, and our ambition that it will one day become the healthiest. Not only does the shadow of death become less terrifying at all age groups but the children born in Singapore have a steadily lengthening expectation of life, and during their lives they can expect to be less handicapped by disease.

The first impression of our visitors from overseas is not only the youthfulness - but the health of our Singapore.

Yet this is a city within 100 miles from the equator; it contains one of the most congested square miles of any urban area, and we are a port through which pass ships and aeroplanes from all countries along which might travel the seeds of disease.

This is not said in any complacency to suggest a slackening of effort. The battle for health must go on. We can and must do still better; and in this endless battle, there is no truce, and there can be no relaxation.

Unless there is constant study, constant improvement in our equipment and facilities, and the growing co-operation of the people in maintaining their own health and that of their environment, our high standards cannot be maintained, let alone improved. The battle against disease must be planned and co-ordinated; there may be many fronts but there is only one battlefield.

This co-ordination is outstandingly illustrated in this Institute of Health which I will have the good fortune to open this afternoon.

First it is an Institute of Health; it carries its ambition in its title. And I think we can congratulate the architects who, with their bright pattern of line and light, have sought to illustrate the vitality of good health. It will continue to be yet another free tonic provided by government.

Again, this Institute is a laboratory of citizenship of public health in politics - for all will work together in the service of health.

Here the health services of the Government, of the City Council and of the University of Malaya Department of Social Medicine and Public Health will work happily and constructively together: and research, training of staff, and direct service and education for the people will be carried out together as different branches of our common task which is to maintain and raise still higher the high standards of health in Singapore.

Again the emphasis of our work will be on our younger generation with the Maternity and Child Welfare Clinic of the City Council and the pre-School and School Health Service provided by Government. Again, we are situated where the need is the greatest with an estimated quarter of a million people within a mile and half radius of this short, but symbolic ceremony.

It is not only⁹ co-operative effort within our own family of citizens but is a practical example of creative international co-operation. The people of the United Kingdom through Colonial Development and Welfare Fund have made a contribution of one and a half million dollars towards the total cost of \$2,000,000.

The gift of the people of the United Kingdom for an enterprise of this nature which, as Your Excellency has already said is probably unique in the world, expresses not merely the goodwill of the people of your country but also the foresight they have in regard to matters of health.

I ask Your Excellency to convey to the people of the United Kingdom the thanks of the Government of Singapore, of the City Council and of the University of Malaya, for the donation of the wherewithal for the erection of this magnificent building.

The institute has the full support of the World Health Organisation who see in Singapore one of the leading training centres in public health and are increasing their assistance in teachers to train our public health staff. And the United Nations International Childrens Emergency Fund has provided equipment of the value of \$60,000.

Above all, this is a scheme of practical work at the service of the people, and from the experience gained here new and wider avenues to public health will be opened up.

In this institute students, doctors, almoners, health visitors and others, work with professional workers in the fields of health, the general practitioner, the research worker, the health officer, the medico-social worker, the public health nurse, the tuberculosis nurse, the health inspector and the officers of social welfare and voluntary societies.

The student will see a health department at work through taking part in the running of the preventive health services; he will learn his future role as a practitioner; he will see medical practitioners at work in both curative and preventive medicine. He will join in research programmes; and above all he will, through work and discussion and conference, together come to feel one of a team of health officer, the midwife and the voluntary worker.

And the community will be the great gainer from this striking addition to our health services. It will improve the standard of training of health staff; it will give new services to the people; it will provide the facilities for field research which are essential to our progress, by the study of our own problems and analysis of our own experience at first hand; and with the growing reputation of the centre more research students will be attracted from the best medical schools of our region and of the world; and the social workers, co-operating with the medical services, will find here greater opportunities for successful work.

And the University whose professional services will be available both for treatment of patients and for training will have greater facilities for teaching their students and carrying out their essential research. In these days of our new family of citizens, I hope we will always regard this Institute of Health in a very real sense as our family clinic with its motto "No Commonwealth without Common Health". And it is with this sense of opening a new door into a better future and with the sense of friendship with the many whose generosity and skill have made it possible and whose skill and sympathy will be blended here, that I declare open this Institute of Health.

MAY 14, 1958.

(Time issued 1600 hours.)