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TEXT OF A SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH, THE HON. MR. A.J. BRAGA, READ OUT BY THE ASSISTANT MINISTER TO THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON. MR. M.P.D. NAIR, AT THE FINAL PRIZE-GIVING CEREMONY OF THE "OUR SINGAPORE" QUIZ COMPETITION AT THE GREAT WORLD AT 8 P.M. ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1958.

It is with regret that the Minister for Health is unable to be present here today as he had to be out of Singapore this week-end. I have been asked by him to read this message to you.

You have heard the Chief Minister and other Ministers talk to you of civic matters and citizenship; so perhaps it may be of interest to you to know what Government is doing in looking after the health of the people of Singapore.

For five years previous to the Labour Front Coalition Government coming to power in early 1955, only 240 beds were added to those existing. Today within a period of nearly three and a half years we have been able to add some 2,000 free beds to our hospital strength - there will be further increases soon - next year there will be an additional 400 beds, and a further 500 towards the end of the year.

While we have been augmenting the bed needs of Singapore we have taken all possible measures to improve other aspects. We have increased our outpatient facilities from six to 15 outpatient clinics during the period. Our travelling dispensaries, which now number 4, cover a wide net-work covering all corners of Singapore to bring the medical services to the people as you can see from the pamphlet here. The two launch dispensaries go not only regularly visit the various islands, but also to the off-shore areas of the main island to which road access is not available. These attend to those needing treatment, and if patients are found requiring hospital treatment, they are brought to the hospital.

In the preventive and personal health aspects substantial progress has been made. As you know, malaria has been eradicated from Singapore. Many of the dangerous intestinal diseases are declining rapidly. In the City there is a population of approximately 900,000 persons. The City Council has been able to provide seven Maternity and Child Health Centres. In the rural areas for a population of some 600,000 Government has provided 54 such centres.

Among the more important campaigns to make the people of Singapore healthy, we have also gone into the question of tackling the major social scourge, namely tuberculosis which affects so many people of Singapore - some perhaps do not know that they have the disease. You know that much effort was previously made to combat this disease by extensive provision at Tan Tock Seng Hospital and by voluntary organisations such as S.A.T.A. Despite these efforts there are still many suffering from the disease. We therefore sought Colombo Plan assistance and, under the guidance of their experts, we are now carrying out a purposeful case-finding programme which, if extended to cover the entire island, must eventually result in the eradication of the disease.

Free X-ray2/2

Free X-ray examination is being carried out in four centres in Singapore. Today they are being carried out at the North Canal Road Clinic and at the Government Health Branch in Maxwell Road - remember the X-rays are voluntary, confidential, free and there is no undressing.

A card will be sent to you if you are free from disease. Should you be found to have any lung affection you will be invited to further detailed examination - and, if necessary, given free hospital treatment.

I would invite your further co-operation, as you are already giving it very willingly, to support this - so that you and your children may live happily and free from this dreadful disease.

I have not the time to detail all the help Government is giving you and your children - free inoculation against diphtheria and immunization from various diseases.

Your Government will continue to expand the medical services in order that all of us and our children can live in health and happiness in the years to come.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1958.

(Time issued at 1600 hours)

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