

TEXT OF A RADIO MALAYA BROADCAST FOR WORLD HEALTH
DAY BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH, THE HON. MR. A.J.
BRAGA, AT 7.10 P.M. ON MONDAY, APRIL 7, 1958.

Today the World Health Organisation is celebrating its 10th anniversary. You have heard the message of the Director-General of the World Health Organisation which was broadcast throughout the world. The theme for the year is "Ten Years of Health Progress." Singapore is receiving much assistance from this organisation, which is a specialised agency of the United Nations, and joins in the celebration. It is therefore appropriate that we should review the achievements made, and take cognisance of what has to be done.

The year 1948 found us still trying to overtake the ravages created by the Second World War with its heritage of shortages of men and material, destitution and malnutrition. Diseases which were only endemic (that is, prevailing not in large numbers) were rampant. Malaria, gastro-intestinal diseases, tuberculosis and other respiratory conditions prevailed in epidemic proportions. We were also recovering from the effects of visitations of small-pox and poliomyelitis.

I do not propose to go into actual details, as it will take a considerable time to do so. You will be able to see our achievements, and how they were attained, at the Health Exhibitions which are being held in nine centres throughout Singapore, which were opened this morning and will last for a week.

Let me, however, quote some statistics: In 1948 the crude death rate was at the very high figure of 12.5 per 1,000 persons; today the death rate, through our joint efforts, has declined to under seven per 1,000 of the population in 1957 - which is amongst the lowest in the world. The infant mortality rate has cascaded from 81 in 1948 to 40 per 1,000 live births in 1957.

You will be glad to hear that the rural areas of Singapore won the Kettering Shield for the excellence of its Maternity and Child Health services. This shield is awarded by the National Baby Welfare Council, London, for outstanding achievements in child health work.

In regard to peri-natal mortality (that is to say, still births and deaths within the first week of life) it is also heartening to note that, from the latest returns of world mortality figures for infants, Singapore ranks fifth among the developed countries -- both the United States of America and the United Kingdom taking sixth and 13th places respectively -- an achievement we can really be proud of.

Singapore has been free from many major infectious diseases, such as plague, cholera and small-pox, as also respiratory affections.

These satisfactory results could not have been achieved without your co-operation, the vigilance of the medical departments, and the medical profession, and the utilisation of modern methods, both in the curative and preventive fields.

In Singapore we have 54 Maternity and Child Health Centres in the rural areas -- a provision at the rate of one centre for every 10,000 persons -- a standard comparable with the best in the world.

We have.....2/-

We have been able to double the hospital bed strength and increase outpatient dispensary facilities four-fold during the last two years. We have instituted considerable training facilities for general nurses, mental nurses, district nurses, health visitors, midwives and assistant nurses. We have also promoted health education vigorously. Wholesome water supply has been extended to all corners of Singapore with the exception of a few remote areas of the island. More and more sanitary homes are replacing the insanitary structures that some had to live in in the past.

The School Health Service looks after the medical care of school children for which there are special dispensaries made available. School children receive constant care from the School Health Service which has been expanded considerably in recent years.

The University of Malaya, an institution nine years old, has also made its impress on the health of the population.

Visualising future needs, Government has planned to build a general hospital of 1,000 beds and 10 district hospitals. We should start work on one of these shortly. We are also going to build more outpatient clinics and more Maternity and Child Health Centres.

Before concluding I take this opportunity of inviting you all to visit the Health Exhibitions which you will find both interesting and instructive.

APRIL 7, 1958.

(Time issued at 1600 hours)

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