

SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH, MR. A.J. BRAGA, AT PRESENTATION OF MEDALS TO BLOOD DONORS AT GENERAL HOSPITAL THIS EVENING, 5 P.M.

It always affords me much pleasure to come to the Blood Transfusion Centre to present medals to the voluntary blood donors. Today, however, is a very special occasion, because for the first time we are presenting Gold Bars for those who have given blood thirty or more times. Six people have qualified for these Gold Bars which will be attached to the Gold Medals they have already won. I think their's is quite an outstanding effort, and I would like to specially thank them for what they have done.

Today we are also presenting 10 Gold Medals to those who have donated blood 20 times or more, and 46 Silver ones to those who have done so 10 times or more. I hope the time is not far distant when I will have the pleasure of presenting Gold Bars to all these donors.

During 1957 a total of 9,092 transfusions were given, compared with 7,769 during 1956. This is quite a considerable increase, and donors are needed in ever increasing numbers.

I would like to record that of the patients receiving transfusions, 7,049 were Chinese, but we are still far from getting full support from the Chinese community. Only 2,592 donations came from Chinese donors - just over one-third of the amount urgently required by members of their community, and I would like to appeal to them and to dispel any fear that they may be suffering that donating blood will affect their health and/or of any superstition in the giving of their blood to save the lives of others.

Once again we must record our indebtedness to the Armed Forces, and particularly to the Royal Air Force, who provided 2,955 donations. At a time when there are persons who are free with their criticisms it is pleasant to record the evidence of voluntary service from members of the Royal Air Force who in fact only remain individually in Singapore for a comparatively short time and who have not hesitated to donate their blood to save the lives of members of all communities in Singapore.

It is also pleasant to record a very marked increase in their support received from relatives and friends of patients. During the year 1,583 donations were received from them, nearly double the number in 1956, This is most encouraging, and it is hoped that this improvement will continue.

I offer my congratulations and the sincere thanks of my Ministry, and of the Government, to all those public-spirited persons who are now about to receive these tokens of appreciation of the very valuable work that they are doing. May they continue this service to the community, and be an example and an inspiration to those who have not yet joined the ranks of donors but whom we hope will do so in the near future.

February 14, 1958.

(Time issued 1120 hours)

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