

SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH, THE HON. MR. A. J. BRAGA, AT THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE HELD AT JESSELTON, NORTH BORNEO, ON AUGUST 30, 1958

In the changing state of Asia, we must be prepared, as a combined unit which is too big to be ignored, to play our full part.

We are your guests as the Parliamentary representatives of the people to discuss our common problems as parliamentarians and inform each other of our respective achievements. These discussions are particularly valuable with the need we all have to read the trends of our future; for we cannot isolate ourselves from the development of Asia, even if we wished to. For collectively we are too great to be ignored, and it cannot be our wish not to play our part, small as our territories are, in the re-alignment of Asia, with the same seismic effects in the politics of the world, as a major geological change would affect the physical structure of the world.

If we are divided and are played off one against the other as were the Balkan nations of Europe, our destiny will be manipulated for the benefit of others, and our internal policies and dreams of economic and social progress will be jeopardised. Neither individually nor collectively can we have any illusions of world grandeur; we can threaten no one; but, because of our position, we can be threatened.

Singapore has successfully adjusted itself to the changing economic patterns of the world, when the old contrast of the industrial West and the raw-material-producing East is breaking down. Asian products and Asian banking firms have found Singapore ready to welcome them.

Before making extensive plans for the future, the first job is to ascertain the extent of the problem - and it is only by X-ray that the early cases of T.B. can be detected.

Implementing recommendations made by Sir Harry Wunderley, Director of Tuberculosis of the Commonwealth of Australia, who was invited to visit Singapore in 1955 in order to assess the situation in this part, the Government of Singapore appointed an Assistant Director of Medical Services (Tuberculosis) whose duty is to coordinate all measures against tuberculosis and to establish a Central Case Registry. The Quarantine and Prevention of Infectious Diseases Ordinance was also amended so that all infectious cases of T.B. are reported to the Assistant Director of Medical Services (Tuberculosis). Having thus prepared the way, a case - finding programme was launched with the assistance of a team of experts from Australia under the Colombo Plan.

Three miniature portable X-ray equipments were obtained from the United Kingdom.

During this survey it is proposed to X-ray 50,000 persons over the age of 14 years in four selected areas. It was emphasised to the public that it was free, voluntary, confidential and that there will be no undressing. The people are co-operating in a wonderful manner. All the evidence goes to prove that the people of Singapore appreciate what we are doing for them.