

to promote the development of a national campaign in this difficult sphere of social education. Its responsibility is, therefore, all the greater to ensure that the methods that are advocated are tested fully in order to fulfil the conditions that I enumerated.

#### CENTRAL AID

The Central Government is proposing to give, before the end of March 1956, a sum of Rs. 30 lakhs to State Governments and voluntary agencies as grants for setting up of family planning clinics on the condition that they fulfil certain standards regarding trained staff, equipment and efficiency in their functioning. In addition substantial amounts are available for promoting laboratory and field studies. But, pending the discovery of harmless, effective and cheap methods of controlling conception, the Central Government has decided not to give grants for the purchase and free supply of the contraceptives that are in general use today. In the first place they are costly and encouragement of their use through grants from public funds on a sufficiently large scale to produce a significant fall in the birth rate would result in such an inroad into the available resources as to leave little or nothing for urgent schemes in connection with our national programmes of development. Lastly steps are being taken to establish training facilities for producing the required number of skilled workers of various types for pushing ahead with the family planning campaign on a countrywide scale.

#### COURAGEOUS OUTLOOK

While referring at some length to the various steps that are being taken to promote family planning I must emphasize the view that I have always held that restriction of population growth is essentially a negative attitude towards the problem of man's adjustment to the resources that are available to him. The extent to which human ingenuity can be exercised to extract from nature all that man wants is an index of the growth of civilisation and, as modern science is making it increasingly clear to us, there is perhaps no limit to the progress that can be made in this direction. Therefore, our outlook should be one of courage and optimism.

A determined and concerted effort to develop the resources that the available to us is not only a step in the right direction but it is also a measure of our resiliency and determination to meet the challenge of the population problem with the positive steps necessary to the solution of that problem. Within the past seven years the existing Governments in our country have done more to promote national welfare on a planned basis and to move steadily towards socialism and the uplift of the common man than was accomplished over several decades under previous Governments. Let us get on whole-heartedly with this good fight and we shall do more to gain confidence in ourselves and to promote our self-respect than by merely adopting the negative attitude of birth control as the panacea for

all our ills. Please also remember that the moment the standard of life goes up, the birth rate will *ipso facto* fall.

#### PEOPLE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Above all let us educate our people in the basic facts of living not only for themselves but also for others. In the ultimate analysis the future of the nation lies in the hands of the people and all can contribute their share, by correct thinking and living, to the promotion of national welfare. If our people can be persuaded to abolish child marriage and to encourage the idea that both men and women should become adults before they marry, then quite a few years of active reproductive life will be put out of the picture in regard to population growth and that will itself have a tremendous effect on the population problem.

Education in the widest sense of the term is the true remedy for the population problem as well as for all other human ills. In any event I hope India will in this field be true to her traditions. I would like every one of my listeners both at home and indeed in the wider world to read Gandhiji's little book entitled "Self-restraint versus self-indulgence." The Father of the Nation, as we call him, instinctively knew what was best for India.

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*Role of non-political agencies in easing world tensions stressed by Prime Minister Nehru before WHO*

*Regional Committee.*

The significant contribution being made by non-political UN agencies such as the World Health Organization towards easing world tension and resolving conflict outside their own immediate fields of action was highlighted by India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru this morning in an address inaugurating the Seventh Session of the WHO Regional Committee for S. E. Asia at Patiala House, New Delhi.

The Regional Committee's five-day conference, bringing together representatives of nine S. E. Asian countries to lay plans for WHO's 1956 programme in this part of the world, opened with addresses by Prime Minister Nehru and India's Minister of Health, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. The inaugural meeting was presided over by the outgoing chairman of the Regional Committee, Dr. Abdul Rahim, Delegate from Afghanistan and director of that country's National Malaria Institute.

The Prime Minister dwelt at length on what he called the "indirect approach" to the settlement of controversial issues in human affairs. Pointing out that statesmen and politicians were engaged in efforts to solve world problems directly, he declared that the "indirect approach" through the type of work being done by

WHO, UNESCO and other UN specialized agencies might actually achieve the desired objective sooner. The indirect approach, he said, was able to get around the defenses of the opposition, while the direct approach often led to direct aggressive defense.

In this connection Mr. Nehru stressed the importance of mental health. Physical health, he declared, was only one aspect of total health and a relatively small part of it because without mental health, physical health would go to pieces. However, he emphasized this did not mean that any less stress should be laid on such things as fighting communicable diseases like malaria and raising levels of physical well-being among mothers and children. He said that particularly in the under-developed areas of the world these matters, especially child health, should continue to have a very high priority. The more of this kind of work there was, he said, the better it would be for the world as a whole.

Referring to the problems created by the rapid increase of population in many countries of Asia, Prime Minister Nehru declared that although some people were "greatly alarmed" by this situation, he felt that the end of the world was not in sight just because statisticians were producing "fancy figures" to show how many people there might be in a given country so-and-so many years hence.

The problem of population growth was, of course, highly important and raising overall standards of living would be difficult unless the rapid increase were checked. But it was necessary to get away from the habit of discussing the matter either "academically" or "heatedly" and to take a balanced view of the whole question while at the same time not getting "cold feet" about adopting whatever measures were necessary towards solving the problem.

The Prime Minister pointed out that in dealing with this kind of problems too many people tended to forget the human aspect, leaving out of consideration the fact that behind the statistics, graphs and figures were individual men, women and children who must be treated as human beings and won over to new ideas. Too often, he declared, there was a tendency to approach the solution of social and economic problems with an attitude of superiority towards those among whom the problems existed. But the presumption of superiority of one group of human beings over another was both unjustified and foolish. The only successful method was to win co-operation by treating people as equals, trying not only to teach them but also to learn from them.

Welcoming the delegates on behalf of the Government of India, which is host this year for the third time to annual meetings of the WHO Regional Committee, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Minister of Health, expressed the hope that in future it would be possible "to get more money into the coffers of WHO" so as to make it possible for the Organization to meet a larger

portion of the increasing demands of the member countries for its services. However, she added that it was gratifying to note how much had been achieved even with the little that had been made available so far.

"It has always seemed to me," the Minister of Health declared, "that if international goodwill and understanding are to triumph over mistrust and suspicion, the victory will be achieved through humanitarian services and I have no doubt in my own mind that WHO is the best agency of the United Nations to serve this purpose."

In his opening address Dr. Abdul Rahim, retiring Chairman of the Regional Committee, stressed the need for adequate co-ordination, at the national level, of assistance being received from various sources by the health services of the member countries in S. E. Asia. He also praised the role that the Government of India had played, during the early phase of WHO's existence, in the decision to set up regional organizations throughout the world to meet regional needs directly. "Some doubts were expressed about the wisdom of this step at such an early stage," he declared, "but those in favour of immediate regionalization carried the day." It was therefore fitting that the Organization's indebtedness to India should be recorded.

Before concluding its inaugural meeting this morning, the Regional Committee elected Lt. Col. C. K. Lakshmanan, India's Chief Delegate and Director-General of Health Services, as chairman for the current session. Dr. R. Mochtar, Chief Delegate for Indonesia, was chosen as vice-chairman.

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## WORK FOR WELFARE OF THE BLIND

### Review of U. K. Society's Achievement

CONFERENCE that the great task it set out to tackle four years ago—a dual campaign for the prevention of blindness in Britain's overseas territories and alleviating the effects which blindness has so far produced—is expressed in the annual report of the British Empire Society for the Blind (BESB), just presented at the society's annual meeting in London.

During the first year of its life the society concentrated on collecting information, in order to gauge more exactly the dimensions of the problem of blindness in British dependent territories; in its second year plans for attacking this problem were laid; in the third year the BESB was able to announce that the foundations of effective systems for the welfare of the blind had been laid in 26 territories. Now the first fruits of the enterprise are beginning to appear, and to justify the view the the methods used by the society are on the right lines.

Surveys to ascertain the causes of, and possible remedies for, the high incidence of blindness in West and East Africa and in Aden have been launched; schools and training centres have been built; and blind