

# Regional Cooperation

*by A.A. Sandosham*

THE VALUE OF INTERNATIONAL conferences and seminars on medical subjects participated by world authorities is well recognised. Diseases and vectors of diseases are no respecters of political boundaries and the rapid means of transport available today make the introduction of exogenous ailments more frequent. However, the high cost of travel to and from a foreign country and subsistence there militates against organising such conferences as frequently as desirable.

## **Regional Meetings**

One way of minimising this disadvantage is to hold similar smaller meetings at the regional level at much less cost to the organisers and participants. Not only will it be possible to hold more frequent meetings but there is the additional advantage of being able to concentrate on diseases peculiar to the region. We, in Southeast Asia, for instance, are not afflicted by conditions like yellow fever, sleeping sickness or Chagas diseases. We can, therefore, afford to leave out the detailed consideration

of such conditions at our regional seminars and conferences and instead share experiences of workers in this region of the problems connected with those diseases that prevail here.

## **Caribbean Confederation**

Associated with the biennial Council meetings of the Commonwealth Medical Association are seminars and scientific sessions with participants from different parts of the Commonwealth. At the Fifth Council meeting of CMA held the year before last in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, the need for meetings at greater frequency than once in two years was recognised and the suggestion was made that the Commonwealth countries should be subdivided into regions and that there should be regional seminars in the intervals between the biennial meetings of the Council. This suggestion was followed up by the Commonwealth countries of the in Jamaica last November and attended by Dr. A.L. Gwee and myself from this region. The formation of the Commonwealth Caribbean Medical Council

was made possible by the boundless energy and enthusiasm of Dr. M. Beaubrun, the secretary of the Medical Association of Jamaica, who was also the chairman of the first Caribbean Medical Conference.

### **Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia**

The question arises as to whether we should do something on those lines in this part of the world. The situation here, however, is somewhat different. The need for regional cooperation has long been recognised by the medical fraternity in this zone. We have regular conferences and seminars organised by the Central Coordinating Board for Tropical Medicine of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation, the Confederation of Medical Associations of Asia and Oceania, the Medical Section of the Pacific Science Congress, the World

Health Organisation and the like. There is also the recent proposal to form a Southeast Asian Medical Association sponsored by the different governments of the region. Besides, there is close liaison between the neighbouring countries, facilitating attendance at medical meetings organised by each other. For instance, this year the Singapore Medical Association and the Malaysian Medical Association are cosponsoring the 3-day seminar on "Trends in Medicine" to be held in Singapore. Several of the National Medical Associations are affiliated to one another and representatives attend each other's annual general meetings and associated clinical and scientific sessions. Whether, in view of the situation in this region, there is such an urgent need to organise regional meetings of the Commonwealth countries in Southeast Asia is debatable although if the necessary finances would be forthcoming, the bringing together of medical men, especially those from Ceylon and India, would certainly help advance the cause of medicine.