

To:  
cc: (bcc: NHB NASReg/NHB/SINGOV)  
Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by Mr Lim Hng Kiang, 7 Apr 2000, 9.00am

# *Singapore Government*

## ***PRESS RELEASE***

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, #36-00 PSA Building, 460 Alexandra Road,  
Singapore 119963. Tel: 3757794/5

---

### **EMBARGO INSTRUCTIONS**

The attached press release/speech is **EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY**.  
Please check against delivery.  
For assistance call 3757795

---

**SPRInter 4.0**, Singapore's Press Releases on the Internet, is located at:  
<http://www.gov.sg/sprinter/>

---

### **OPENING ADDRESS BY MR LIM HNG KIANG, MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SECOND MINISTER FOR FINANCE, AT THE WORLD HEALTH DAY 2000 OPENING AND CORPORATE RECOGNITION CEREMONY AT THE MANDARIN SINGAPORE ON FRIDAY 7 APRIL 2000 AT 9:00 AM**

Lt-General Winston Choo,

Chairman, Singapore Red Cross Society,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are here today to celebrate World Health Day. The theme for World Health Day 2000 is "Safe blood starts with me: Blood saves lives". We are also here to honour the many companies and community organisations who have actively supported the blood donation programme.

2 Blood saves lives everyday. It is crucial to have a safe and adequate supply of blood. The World Health Organisation defines safe blood as blood that does not contain any viruses, parasites, drugs, alcohol, chemical substances, or other factors that might cause harm, or disease to the recipient. In principle, the recipient should not be harmed by receiving blood and the donor should not be put at risk by giving blood.

3 In Singapore, the Singapore Blood Transfusion Service (SBTS) collects over 60,000 units of blood annually. SBTS takes great care to protect the health and safety of both the blood donor and recipient. Stringent criteria are used in the screening of potential blood donors. State of the art technology is used in the processing and testing of donated blood before giving it for transfusion. New standards of blood safety have been imposed in recent years to address the many new infective agents such as HIV, Hepatitis B and C viruses. As a WHO Collaborating Centre in Transfusion Medicine, SBTS is committed to maintaining the highest standards of practice. Singaporeans can rest assured that the safety of our national blood supply is comparable to the best blood banks in the world.

4 However, the provision of a safe and adequate blood supply cannot be achieved without the support of the community. Blood donation is voluntary. It depends on the response of people who donate this gift of life for patients who need it regardless of race, language or religion. We have to reach out to each and everyone in the community and to galvanize the support of as many potential blood donors as possible.

5 The Singapore Red Cross Society or SRCS has been supporting the national blood programme since 1982 when the SRCS Blood Centre was established. SRCS in 1999 contributed about 6% of the annual blood collection in Singapore.

6 SRCS has been a valuable partner to SBTS in the national blood programme. SRCS and SBTS have recently reviewed this partnership to determine how this synergy can be maximised. A major challenge that is being faced by all blood banks in the world, including Singapore, is the maintenance of the blood donor pool. With strict standards being applied to donor screening, it reduces the available donor pool. Effective donor recruitment, and retention has become a critical success factor to ensure adequate blood supply.

7 Enlarging the blood donor pool requires active community involvement. It will be more effectively achieved by a voluntary organisation like the SRCS. SRCS has agreed to take over the responsibility for donor recruitment. SRCS will also take the lead in promoting public awareness on the importance of blood donation and on blood safety. With its long history in community programmes and its access to the vast network of business organisations, non-governmental organisations and other civic groups, SRCS is well placed to encourage nationwide involvement in blood donation.

8 SBTS will, on the other hand, have the responsibility for the collection, processing and distribution of blood and blood components and for ensuring the

quality and safety of blood products in Singapore. In addition, SBTS will continue to provide specialised diagnostic services for immunohaematology and tissue typing to all hospitals and laboratories in Singapore and the Region. Hence, in this new partnership, SRCS will take the leadership for community involvement and SBTS will provide the professional expertise and services.

9 Today, only 2% of our population are blood donors. Of this group, only 35% gives blood two or more times during the year. There is still a vast potential for greater community participation especially since the proportion of donors among the populations in developed countries like UK, USA and Canada is approximately 5%. I am sure that this new partnership between SRCS and SBTS will strengthen our national blood programme and help to develop Singapore into a nation where blood donation is a way of life.

10 This morning's Corporate Recognition Ceremony bears testimony to the effectiveness of SRCS in galvanizing support from the corporate and community sectors for this worthy cause. I congratulate all the companies and organisations for your commitment towards organising blood donor recruitment drives. Your active participation in the national blood programme is greatly appreciated.

11 In conclusion, let me congratulate and commend the Singapore Red Cross Society and the Singapore Blood Transfusion Service for jointly commemorating World Health Day 2000 and for organising a series of activities to bring to the forefront the importance of blood donation and blood safety. I urge all Singaporeans to come forward and support our national blood programme – Let us all remember, blood saves lives. Safe blood starts with each one of us

Thank you.

National Archives of Singapore