

# Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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SPEECH BY MR BERNARD CHEN, MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE,  
AT THE SINGAPORE RED CROSS SOCIETY WORLD RED CROSS DAY PARADE  
AND ENROLMENT CEREMONY AT THE ANGLO CHINESE JUNIOR COLLEGE  
SPORTS COMPLEX DOVER ROAD ON SUNDAY, 4TH MAY '80 AT 4.00 PM

This year marks the 127th Anniversary of the founding of the International Red Cross Movement. It also marks the 31st year of existence of the Singapore Red Cross Society. The International Red Cross Movement has adopted seven basic principles of Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality. In the turbulent world that we live in, there has been no lack of opportunities for the Movement to put its principles to practice. In the eighty years of the 20th Century, there were innumerable disasters and tragedies of all kinds. We have had two world wars and many smaller ones spread throughout the five continents. Wars ranging from civil disturbances to large scale conflicts are still raging. There were also major natural and man made disasters which brought in their wake untold human sufferings. We in Singapore were not spared and we had our share of disasters and tragedies just like everyone else. The only consolation we could draw is that ours were of a much lower scale and therefore affected a much smaller segment of the population. Pain and suffering, however, are not reduced simply because less people are affected. For those who bore the brunt, such pains and suffering were real and severe.

The Red Cross Movement can be justifiably proud of itself in playing a key role in making more bearable the sufferings and pain arising from the tragedies and disasters, made either by nature or man. It has applied in full measure its humanitarian principle to look after the wounded in battles, the victims of disasters and the sick inflicted with diseases. The Movement has done this impartially, regardless of nationality, race,

religion and ideological beliefs. Above all, it has managed to provide this assistance effectively and yet retain a high degree of independence and neutrality. The success of the Movement can best be testified by the numerous requests made of its services by countries which have been afflicted by one kind of disaster or another. These countries can be assured of first class service that can be rendered in the true tradition defined by the Basic Red Cross Principles.

One distinct feature of the Red Cross Movement in Singapore is the eagerness and enthusiasm with which the Singapore Red Cross Society is attempting to draw more of the younger citizens to its ranks and the membership of the Society of 9,750, of which 88 per cent are classified as youths, points to the attainment of this objective. The large number of activities organised by the Society to provide welfare to the handicapped and the sick would not have been possible without the injection of these youthful and energetic volunteers. On a wider scale, there is also need for more volunteers to assist in relief operations whether they are major accidents or floods. There is in the Red Cross Movement a whole spectrum of opportunities which the Society can make use of as training aids for its members. The experience that members can gain from participating in the activities constitutes a valuable education on humanity and unity, vital qualities of good citizenry. These qualities of care for our fellowmen and the desire to render voluntary service without rewards are best inculcated at a young but impressionable age.

The Singapore Red Cross Society should therefore exploit this potential to the fullest extent possible by recruiting more members and through its activities and programmes impart to the new members the basic principles which the Red Cross Movement hold in high esteem. On their part, the members should strive to make the best of the experience they can obtain from the Movement and serve enthusiastically and unselfishly. Moreover, they should not confine themselves to practising the Red Cross principles only when they are participating in the Society's activities. They should ensure that they will continue to put into practice these principles in their daily lives. In other words, their membership with the Red Cross Movement should become the guiding light with which they could go through life helping their fellowmen. Let me wish the Red Cross Society and its members, old and new, every success in this noble and important mission.

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