

ADDRESS OF MR. YONG HYUK LIN, MINISTER FOR HEALTH,  
AT THE INTER-REGIONAL SEMINAR ON PUBLIC HEALTH  
PROGRAMMES IN RADIATION PROTECTION SPONSORED BY WORLD  
HEALTH ORGANISATION AT THE INSTITUTE OF PATHOLOGY,  
GENERAL HOSPITAL, ON TUESDAY, 7TH DECEMBER, 1965  
AT 1015 HOURS.

It is my pleasure and privilege, on behalf of the Government and people of Singapore, to extend a warm welcome to all the distinguished consultants and participants from 17 countries who are attending this Inter-regional Seminar on "Public Health Programmes in Radiation Protection", sponsored by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

It was only a year ago, (October 1964), that Singapore had the privilege of holding the WHO Multiple Seminar on Radiological Health - which can be considered to be closely allied with the present subject of this Seminar.

As Singapore is technically not yet a member of WHO, as it became an independent and sovereign country, separate and distinct from Malaysia, only 4 months ago, we consider it a double honour to be able to play hosts to WHO for this Seminar.

Now that Singapore has become the 117th and youngest member of UN, it follows naturally that we will be seeking membership of the various UN Specialised Agencies, such as WHO, and we look forward to participating in the proceedings of the 19th WHO Assembly meeting to be held in Geneva in May, next year, not in the capacity of just an "Observer" but as a full participating member!

Although Singapore is not technically a member of WHO, WHO's association with Singapore, however, is not something which has yet to be established. In fact, the Office of the WHO representative of this Area was established in Singapore in 1956, 9 years ago. It was only after the establishment of Malaysia that WHO took leave of Singapore for Kuala Lumpur. As Singapore will soon become a member of WHO, officially, perhaps WHO'S representative is now contemplating returning to Singapore again? Being a free port, Singapore welcomes everyone, most of all WHO.

Ever since it became known that the great usefulness of Ionising Radiation in the fields of Science and Medicine brought with it dangerous hazards, if improperly handled, a large body of knowledge on Radiation Hazards has been built up. This has been possible, thanks to the notable efforts of physicists and doctors over the past 70 years and especially the establishment of the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) in the 1920s.

With the advent of the Atomic bomb in the 1940s and later the Hydrogen bomb, the attendant dangers of radio-active fall-out affecting a wide area stirred up active interest amongst more scientists and doctors, and international organisations or agencies other than WHO also pitched in, namely:-

- (a) Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO)
- (b) International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
- (c) International Labour Organisation (ILO)

It is already proving quite a handful for Public Health authorities all over the world to contend with "water pollution" and "air pollution", and now, more dangerous "radio-active pollution" rears its ugly head too! As is usual, most problems in this world are man-made, through carelessness or plain stupidity, and these have to be resolved by man himself.

We are most grateful too that this WHO Seminar is being held in Singapore, situated as we are in a turbulent corner of the world, known as South-East Asia. We are reasonably proud of the standards achieved in our Radiography work (for diagnostic purposes in all its aspects) and will soon launch into more advanced Radiotherapy work with better equipment and facilities when our new Institute of Medical Specialities is ready. As for Radioisotope work, we have just made a start, both in medicine and industry. This Seminar will bring to us the rich experience and expertise of other countries covering all aspects of Radiation Protection which will give us an excellent stimulus to bring ourselves abreast with the times and thus still further improve the quality of our work.

Singapore as yet is without a nuclear reactor, even for research purposes. We follow with interest the fact that electrical power is now being generated by nuclear plants in various parts of the world and we hope the day will come soon when present high costs can be brought down to a more economic level, so that we can seriously consider setting up a nuclear electric power station to serve the needs of our fast growing industries.

Finally, we are cheered by the fact that with the increasing knowledge which the scientific world has on Radiation hazards, the greater is the strength of world opinion in pressurising their respective governments to bring about a total ban of nuclear bomb testing; to outlaw war as a means for settling disputes between nations and to preach the philosophy of peace. The alternative is too hideous to contemplate! For with war and its likely escalation to nuclear war, there can be no victors, only total and wanton destruction and annihilation of mankind and a devastated and uninhabited world, to boot.

Let us therefore choose the way of peace, of health and of happiness, like the theme of this Seminar:- how to use Ionising Radiation to heal, in search for better health and thus to sustain LIFE, not to injure or to kill, which is DEATH. It is on this ominous note, that I now have great pleasure in declaring open the WFO Inter-Regional Seminar on Public Health Programmes in Radiation Protection and to wish it every success.

DECEMBER 6, 1965.