

24 MAR 1984

Singapore Government

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Release No.: 23/MAR  
10-3/84/03/18

SPEECH BY MR WAN HUSSIN ZOOHRI, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY  
(HEALTH AND CULTURE), AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF  
THE RED CROSS BLOOD COLLECTION CENTRE AT RED CROSS HOUSE,  
PENANG LANE, ON SUNDAY, 18 MARCH 1984 AT 10.00 AM

Modern medical practices and surgery have created over the years greater demands for blood which is an essential part of medical treatment. This demand for blood will escalate in future as we upgrade our standards of health care and service. In order to keep up with the demands for blood and to maintain adequate blood stocks and reserves, more blood donors need to be recruited. As a nation, we need to be self-sufficient in blood.

The voluntary system of blood donation is best as blood obtained through a professional donation system carries a higher risk of transmittable diseases. This is because people, motivated by financial gain, may conceal their illnesses in order to effect sales of blood. We have been fortunate in that our country's blood requirements have always been met by a totally voluntary system of blood donation. This was only possible with the co-operation of the community which has taken the attitude that blood donation is a special responsibility of every Singaporean. Their donations have helped to save many lives.

About two years ago, Mr Goh Chok Tong, Minister of Defence and Second Minister for Health speaking at the Red Cross Society Charity Dinner, proposed that the Society consider playing a more active role in the national effort to recruit blood donors and increase blood donation.

The Red Cross society is well placed to do this. Firstly, its reputation as a humanitarian relief organisation makes it easy for people to identify it with giving assistance to those less fortunate than ourselves. Secondly, the Singapore Red Cross Society, through its membership in the League of Red Cross, can have access to a variety of donor recruitment material. The league of Red Cross is extensively involved in blood collection programmes in many countries. For example, in Australia, New Zealand and Canada, the entire national blood programme is organised by the Red Cross. Within ASEAN countries, regional national Red Cross Societies play a major role in blood donation programmes in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. Thirdly, the Singapore Red Cross can through its Youth Group activities in schools and junior colleges do much to disseminate information on blood donation and transfusion. This will encourage our young people to participate in the community service of donating blood.

The Singapore Red Cross Society has responded to Mr Goh's call. Today, it sees the fruits of its many months of effort in the opening of the Red Cross Blood Centre. The Ministry of health supports this effort. For this reason, it has given financial support as well as technical advice on the operations of the Centre. The Centre will supplement the efforts of the Singapore Blood Transfusion Service (BTS). Blood collected by the Centre will be tested, processed and distributed by BTS. To emphasise their close association, those giving blood at the Red Cross Blood Centre will have the same medical benefits as those who donate blood at the Blood Transfusion Service.

Finally, I would like to wish the Red Cross Blood Centre every success.

I am pleased to declare open the Red Cross Blood Collection Centre.

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