

Singapore Government

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SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MP FOR POTONG PASIR, MR HOWE YOON CHONG, AT THE LAUNCHING OF THE NATIONAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN AT LORONG 8, TOA PAYOH, ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1979, AT 8 P.M.

The 1979 National Health Campaign began yesterday and will end on October 25. Its main aim is to get our people to learn more about those illnesses which result from the stresses and strains of modern day living. Some are due to over-eating, eating wrong foods, smoking, and lack of physical exercise. With rising standards of living, the life-styles of the people will change. Where physical health is concerned the change is not for the better. Many illnesses associated with the stresses and strains of modern living are becoming more common. The National Health Campaign has singled out five diseases for special attention. They are (i) heart attack, (ii) cancer, (iii) diabetes, (iv) high blood pressures, and (v) mental illness. The first four are included in the 10 major causes of deaths in Singapore. The fifth, mental illness, although it does not cause death, brings with it much agony and hardship to the patient and members of his family. It is difficult to treat, and requires hospitalisation over long periods. We should sympathize with the patient and his family and not attach any stigma to this disease and its sufferer.

Our Government medical services can treat these five diseases provided they are discovered early. Medical science is not yet able to determine their causes and their cures. Doctors know some of the contributory causes of these diseases but they cannot ensure their cure and eradication. Those suffering these ailments will have to live with them and hopefully with proper care keep them under control.

The month-long campaign will educate the public to take preventive measures or to seek immediate medical treatment at the first sign of any of these illnesses. Early detection will prevent the disease from causing serious harm or even death. Proper treatment will give better chances of controlling the disease.

Health is2/-

Health is more important than wealth. Yet very few of us take the trouble to maintain good health. In our anxiety to get on with our work, to earn more and to attain a better standard of living, we forget that our bodies cannot cope with the stresses and strains without giving way here and there. We have more to spend than before but we adopt wrong life-styles. Cigarette smoking, for instance, is not conducive to health. Eating too much is bad. Salty and rich foods can cause high blood pressure. Because we are better off, we are doing ourselves harm. We should keep to a simple way of life, avoid harmful foods and reduce our intake of salt, sugar and meat. Those who are tied down to a desk job should do more exercise to keep fit. Have regular medical check-ups and seek proper treatment early for any disease that may be discovered. Avoid the agony and inconvenience of treatment and hospitalisation by leading a healthier life. Try to prevent contracting the disease. If it cannot be prevented, then ensure early detection and treatment. Support the National Health Campaign to get to know more about these five diseases.

Tonight I wish to take this opportunity to introduce the members of the two Residents' Committees that have just been formed for those living in Lorong 8. Residents' Committees seek the direct participation of residents to improve the living conditions, the environment, and to deal with the many problems associated with life in the high-rise housing estates. Residents' Committees provide better channels of communication between residents and the various government authorities responsible for dealing with these problems. We no longer live in separate houses of our own. In the HDB estates the common corridors, the lifts, the open spaces, the playgrounds, the public utilities, and the drains have all to be regularly maintained. The tenants depend on the authorities to keep these common areas in good working condition. The maintenance must be regular and effective. The tenants must make proper use of these facilities and prevent them from being abused. No amount of regular maintenance by these authorities can keep these facilities in good order if tenants or others keep on abusing them.

The Residents'3/-

The Residents' Committees working closely with the police and the HDB will promote better social consciousness, public order, and security in the housing estates. The common facilities and the environment can be kept in good order. The residents can cooperate and assist in preventing vandalism, crime, and other anti-social behaviour. The Residents' Committees can foster closer contacts between the neighbours in the estate. It can encourage people staying in different blocks within each zone to be more cooperative, friendly, and neighbourly. Help and assistance can be extended by one family to another in times of trouble or distress. Neighbourliness and communal harmony amongst the residents will result with the Residents' Committees organizing sporting activities, and social and cultural functions.

This is a new experiment in building social consciousness, neighbourliness, and cooperative spirit among the residents of HDB estates. You should give it every support and prove that it will succeed for the benefit of all those living in HDB estates.
