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SPEECH BY MR HOWE YOON CHONG, MINISTER FOR HEALTH,
AT THE OPENING OF NURSES WEEK AT THE SINGAPORE
GENERAL HOSPITAL ON SUNDAY, 25 JULY 1982 AT 10 AM

Each year "Nurses Week" serves to bring together our nurses from the various hospitals, clinics, and other branches of the Ministry to participate in a series of activities planned to reinforce the concept of "Service before self" and to foster better relations with the public. These are worthy objectives whose regular reiteration will remind us of our commitment to work for the betterment of our society.

For this year two topical items have been included in the programme. One is the "Visits to Homes for the Aged", in response to the "International Year for the Elderly". The other is the "Nursing as a Career" exhibition, designed to attract more young people into the nursing service.

The amount of work that you have put in to prepare and organize the many activities of "Nurses Week 1982" amply demonstrates the devotion that you have to your service and the pride you take in your work. Your enthusiasm and active participation in the many events, from visiting senior citizens in welfare homes to donating blood to save lives are clear signs of your public-spiritedness and your sympathy for those who are less fortunate and more in need.

With increasing affluence and changing lifestyles, more urbanization and industrialization, the people of Singapore are being subjected to greater stresses and strains and to more accidents which can occur at the workplace and on our roads. The demand for more skilled and experienced nurses will increase. To simply recruit and train more nurses will not solve the problem. What we should do is to actively encourage more people to look after their own physical and mental health. Our people should accept

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that prevention is better than cure. They must learn to pay greater attention to personal health while they are still fit and well. Every person should make a serious effort to keep physically and mentally fit, to take up some form of physical exercise, to avoid over-taxing or abusing his physical system, and to adopt a healthy lifestyle. In this regard our nurses have a key role to play as advocates of good health, as advisors, counsellors, and teachers of preventive measures against diseases, and as modern "Florence Nightingales" who bring solace and assistance to the sick, the disabled and the elderly.

The perennial shortage of nursing staff must have increased your work-load. In the course of your normal work you have to put up with tedious long hours, difficult night shifts, and irregular meal times, not to mention the odd irascible patient or the often irritating relative who are quick to make complaints and tax your tolerance to the limit. Yet in spite of all these you have cheerfully gone about your duties with thoroughness and efficiency and even shouldered the extra burdens necessary to prepare for "Nurses Week" with enthusiasm and fulfilment. This is indeed a most creditable effort and a shining example of public-spiritedness to the community.

Our nursing staff have enjoyed much esteem for their sympathy and care in ministering to the sick and the infirm, and bringing relief and comfort to those in pain and suffering. Their work must remain a labour of love, of human charity and compassion for which our nurses deserve much praise. I am in no doubt that you will keep up the good work, and live up to the proud traditions of your calling!

I have great pleasure in declaring open "Nurses Week 1982"!
