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SPEECH BY MR LEE KHOO CHOY, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE
(PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE) AND PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION
AT THE 13TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER OF THE NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION
AT THE TANGLIN/KATONG ROOMS, SHANGRI-LA HOTEL ON 10 SEPTEMBER 82 AT 8.00 PM

The National Kidney Foundation was founded on 7 July 1969. One of its objectives was to save the lives of many of our fellow citizens who face certain death in end-stage kidney disease.

Recently, together with the Ministry of Health and the Medico-Legal Society, we had a Symposium on 'Organ Donation - Whose Responsibility?' While we are appreciative of the public response to the Symposium and the TV forum where our invited guest speakers participated, we still have in our small Republic about 200 persons who are both helpless and hopeless unless they are fitted into the dialysis programme or receive a kidney.

Last Saturday, the National Kidney Foundation opened its Dialysis Centre. We realise that it cannot answer all the problems for these cases of end-stage kidney disease. We cannot replace the Kidney Centres that are already functioning in Singapore but we hope to complement their work so that more patients are able to receive dialysis.

We have also promoted organ donation through our existing system of cards. While we cannot hope to achieve the target of every citizen signing a card, we hope that by doing this promotion for the week, we would impress upon our society the need to be more caring of our neighbours.

Singapore has reached a stage of affluence where most families have proper roofs above their heads, have proper meals and time for recreation. However, you will agree with me, that in those homes where the end-stage patient awaits his or her fate, there can be no real happiness until something definitive is done. The Kidney Foundation has no legislative powers but we can stimulate, in fact,

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we hope to stir the social conscience of our society that they too must bear the responsibility to meet this urgent problem.

Let me assure our friends of the Kidney Foundation and through you to the larger public that the Kidney Foundation will continue to do its part. We shall let no stone unturned until an acceptable solution is achieved, whether it be by a Contracting Out Legislation or by other measures that do not require such a legislation.

However, I do wish to state that much more can be done at the present moment without changing the legislation. Ever since the National Kidney Foundation started its Organ Donation Campaign in 1973, response from the public has been slow. At the opening ceremony of the campaign, the then Minister for Health, Mr Chua Sian Chin and the entire Council and the Executive Committee of the National Kidney Foundation donated their kidneys. But we have been painfully aware that about 2,000 persons have died in these past 10 years who could have been saved. Obviously, we should do more than a donor card campaign since the mere signing of a card does not necessarily mean that the person will ever give his or her kidney.

The sad fact is that, each year the same number of people will die unless something is done. The National Kidney Foundation is doing our part by providing more places for dialysis, by leasing out machines for home dialysis, by pressing for a fresh code at our legislation in order to harvest kidneys that would have given life to so many. I wish to thank the many persons who have helped us to set up the Kidney Centre in particular, Mr Lee Seng Gee of the Lee Foundation who gave us \$300,000 and the Shaw Foundation, headed by no less than our Vice-President, Tan Sri Runme Shaw. Some ladies have volunteered help as volunteer nurses and here I would like to appeal to our local women to come forward. Because we are a private body, we need to get every available support to run the Kidney Centre and this would include nursing help.

Lastly, we would like to thank our foreign speaker, Professor Roy Calne of Cambridge University for coming a long way to give the NKF Lecture. We learn from other people's experience and Singapore is no exception. If we can improve the health of the community by making people aware of their responsibility, by giving hope to those who otherwise have none, we have achieved at least a little. And to you who have come tonight to support our objective. I thank you.

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