

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE

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MG/JULY/21/77(Labour)

77-0PB-10

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23 JUL 1977

SPEECH BY MR ONG PANG BOON, MINISTER FOR LABOUR,
AT THE PRESENTATION OF AWARDS TO CHAMPION BLOOD DONORS
AT THE SCHOOL OF NURSING, SINGAPORE
GENERAL HOSPITAL ON FRIDAY, 15 JULY '77 AT 5.00 PM

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Blood is needed in our hospitals. It is required to save lives of those who are badly injured through accidents on the road, at work and in the house. It is also needed to allow major operations to be performed on those suffering from various ailments, whether it is of the heart, kidney or other parts of the body, so that they can lead fuller normal lives. Year by year our hospitals have used more and more blood. For the last 5 years, blood collection had to be increased by some 1,000 donations every year. In 1972, there were 40,000 donations. The number of donations increased to 45,000 in 1976.

We have been able to cope with this demand for blood through blood donations by voluntary blood donors. More than 32,000 persons donated blood in 1976. Nearly 10,000 were regular blood donors who made at least two donations a year. 23,000 were casual donors who donated blood largely through blood donation drives.

That we are able to meet our blood requirements from voluntary donations shows that ours is a society which is prepared to assist those among us who are in need of help. We are not in a situation of some countries where blood donation is a commercialised affair and blood is bought and sold. Voluntary blood donors have met our increasing demand for blood. Their blood donations have contributed in a great way towards the high standard of health care in our Republic.

The Blood Transfusion Service tells me that the Republic needs to work towards a situation of ensuring a steady and predictable supply of blood. The present core of some 10,000 regular blood donors can provide some 20,000 donations only. Last year about 25,600 donations were made by casual blood donors during blood donation campaigns. A major concern therefore remains to find an adequate number of people to donate blood. We need a bigger core of blood donors as well as more and regular blood donation campaigns.

The uniformed services have always supported the call for blood donations. The support of the uniformed services should continue. A total of 38% of our blood donations last year came from members of the Singapore Armed Forces. This big contribution by the Armed Forces is praiseworthy and should be emulated by the other uniformed services like the Vigilante Corps and the Special Constabulary.

Firms and unions have assisted in ensuring that our needs for blood are met. Much more should be done. More companies and unions, especially those with a large complement of staff or members, should hold regular blood donation drives at least once a year. The civil service and statutory bodies should also do the same. Encouraging more personnel and members to donate their blood to the once a year campaigns or holding twice a year blood donation drives among different departments or branches would greatly assist the Blood Transfusion Service's efforts to ensure that our hospitals have a stable supply of blood.

All the blood donors present here have distinguish themselves in the service to the community. They have made 50 blood donations. The award you will receive is only a token of appreciation for your magnificent service. Your greatest reward must be the satisfaction of knowing that you have helped to save many lives. The service each of you have rendered should be an inspiration to all. I hope that your example will lead more people to come forward to be at least regular if not champion donors.