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SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT.

JK/INFS. JN. 18/57.

SPEECH BY THE GOVERNOR, SIR ROBERT BLACK, AT THE
OPENING OF THE BAZAAR IN AID OF THE SINGAPORE
ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND ON SATURDAY, JUNE 8,
1957, AT 10 A.M. AT THE VICTORIA MEMORIAL HALL

It gave me great pleasure when, on the morning of my return to Singapore, I found an invitation from your energetic and sympathetic patron, Mr. G. Sutherland, inviting me to open this Bazaar today. I am very happy to be here because it gives me an opportunity of associating myself with a very worthy cause indeed, namely, the care of the blind in Singapore.

The pamphlet which must be in the hands of many of you reveals how many individuals and how many associations have realised the importance of the great task which lies ahead of us all as good citizens in Singapore of looking after those members of our community here who have the tragic disadvantage of blindness.

I am impressed also by the record of the funds collected at previous Bazaars with evidence that determined efforts and devoted voluntary work have ensured the steady increase annually in the sum obtained. The Association runs a welfare operation in North Bridge Road which is visited by about 200 blind persons a month. They are assisted with food and clothing and are given advice about their family problems. In addition to this valuable humanitarian work the Association has undertaken a major project. This is support for the blind school.

As you know, the Association, with the assistance of Government land and a Government grant to which they added a collection made themselves, have established a school for the blind. There are now about 50 children and students at the Blind School, including those in the nursery school and the primary school and the adolescent trainees. It is estimated, as you will see from your pamphlet, that the running costs of the School will exceed \$70,000 during this year. It is most important that these funds be obtained and your efforts today will play an important part in rendering this possible.

The task of running a school for the blind is a very complicated one indeed. It is not possible to do what can be done in the ordinary school, namely, separating into classes according to age and the intellectual capacity. The position that faces the school authorities when they are dealing with blind children is that there are 50 residential blind young people of both sexes ranging in age from approximately 2 to 20 years.

A group of 12 blind children need an individual teacher for their schooling as well as a house mother with her assistance to look after them after school hours and to help them to become as independent as possible in coping with the every day necessities of life such as washing and dressing themselves, keeping their cottages clean and tidy, making their beds, washing and ironing their clothes. When they learn this they gain self respect and a feeling of self reliance which in turn will enable them to make good citizens of our city of Singapore and able to play their part in

the life of the community.

The school has not yet long been in existence. As it becomes better known and the public come to appreciate the advantages which will flow from its work we must expect that there will be an increased demand for training in the earlier age groups. Indeed for the past nine months some of the accommodation has been adapted so that the later age groups can also be given training in occupations such as carpentry, basket making and so forth.

It is unfortunate that the school cannot take all the trainees who wish to join because of the limitation in accommodation. That is why the Association is planning its further expansion at Government request which involves the erection of two hostels for trainees, one for men and one for women, on additional land which the Government has granted for this purpose. The Association as you will appreciate requires more money, every dollar that can be spared is urgently required and will be well spent.

I would urge you all to spend freely today in what is, I can assure you, a most deserving cause and I should like to take this opportunity of congratulating Mrs. Yung and her large band of helpers for producing today's truly international display and I now have much pleasure in declaring the Bazaar open.

JUNE 8, 1957.

(Time issued 1115 hours.)