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SPEECH BY MINISTER FOR HEALTH, DR TOH CHIN CHYE,  
AT THE NURSES' GRADUATION CEREMONY AT SINGAPORE CONFERENCE HALL  
ON WEDNESDAY, 27 JUNE 1979 AT 11.00 AM

The new scheme of training nurses which was begun in 1977 is progressing satisfactorily and confirms previous studies that academic achievement at "O" level by itself does not indicate whether a trainee has the inclination or aptitude or staying power to make nursing a career. The new system gives all trainees time to settle down and find out for themselves whether the tasks of caring after sick people and the demands made on them by patients match their temperament and convictions. There were 147 recruits in 1977 who are due to qualify as assistant nurses in November this year. So far only 13 have dropped out. The intake in 1978 was 196 among whom 28 have dropped out.

All 36 assistant nurses who were accepted for training as staff nurses in 1976 and 1977 have qualified. There were no drop-outs. In January this year another batch of 92 assistant nurses were selected for training as staff nurses and will qualify in 1981. Of this batch only two have dropped out.

Our nurses work in hospitals, outpatient departments, maternity and child health clinics, school health clinics, the Home Nursing Foundation, the ambulance service, port health authority, prisons, drug rehabilitation centres and the industrial health unit of the Ministry of Labour. The quality of all these services is very related to the temperament and dedication of those who find nursing a satisfying vocation and career. Nurses with initiative and ambition are given opportunity to progress by taking post-basic courses.

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With the streamlining of post-basic courses in 1977 from nine to four there is greater mobility among staff nurses who have taken these specialized courses. I would like to mention in particular the post-basic course in midwifery, paediatrics and community health care. This course has been found to be very suitable in meeting the objectives of Primary Health Care Services and in Accident and Emergency Units. The Nursing Board has agreed that nurses who have passed this post-basic course can be registered to practise also as midwives provided they train for a further period of one year in a maternity unit of which six months should be spent in the labour ward. There will be no further examinations but the additional experience in the maternity unit will put them at par with the midwives.

There are National Service men who undergo training as medical auxiliaries. They should be encouraged to join the nursing service on their discharge as reservists since we need men in some areas of nursing. Their training in the army can be adjusted to meet the training requirements of the assistant nurses so that they can be exempted from part of the training course of civilian nurses should they decide to join the nursing service. In this way their time spent in the army can be used to help prepare for a civilian career and their usefulness to the SAF will be enhanced.

Finally, I would like to commend our nurses who responded so magnificently during the Spyros disaster. They rose to the occasion and has made the nursing profession proud.

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