

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
FOR ST. JOHN AMBULANCE BRIGADE FLAG
DAY DRIVE, OVER RADIO MALAYA ON 25TH
SEPTEMBER, 1961

Good evening,

I want to speak to you tonight about the work of the St. John Ambulance Association and the St. John Ambulance Brigade. I am doing so because tomorrow and throughout the next ten days the Association is holding a nation-wide Flag Drive to raise funds from the public to enable us to carry on our humanitarian work.

I suppose that everyone in the Federation of Malaya must know the black and white uniforms of the St. John Ambulance Brigade. They are a familiar sight wherever crowds of Malayans are gathered together. In fact, they are so familiar that we have long ago come to take their presence for granted at any major event.

Personnel of the Brigade and the Association are all volunteers and the work they do for the good of the community is carried out entirely in their own spare time. These men and women, youths and girls give up a great deal of their leisure to undergo long and intensive training, and they do this willingly and cheerfully in the spirit of the motto of St. John, "For the Service of Mankind". They are always on hand to give first aid in case of accidents or sudden illness, and they have established a well-earned reputation for efficiency and smartness.

To-day the St. John Ambulance Association and its Brigade Workers are established in every State, with the exception of Trengganu and Perlis. But recently volunteers in Trengganu have begun to take an active interest. It is our hope to establish units in both these States. Altogether there are 2,000 members of the Association and over 6,000 members of the Brigade throughout the Federation of Malaya, and their volunteer work for the public never ceases.

Let me give you an illustration or two of the wide activities of St. John. In Penang this year over a period of under seventy days members of the Brigade were on active duty on on less than

fifty-five occasions. These included horse races, football matches, sports meetings, a big walk, a relay race, large picnic and the Wesak Day procession, as well as a nine-hour duty coverage on the departure of a pilgrim ship to Mecca. This example is typical of the work of St. John in any State in which its members operate.

One of the biggest events of the year for the St. John Association is the Thaipusam festival at Batu Caves near Kuala Lumpur where the total crowd may be as high as 120,000. Seventy-nine members of the Brigade camped on the site for three days and nights, operating their own admission room and first-aid theatre. Most of the cases they attended were people who had fainted or broken a bone in an arm, and there was one incident of a girl having an ear half torn off by a robber who grabbed at her ear-ring. Altogether the Brigade dealt with 138 cases on the spot, and found it necessary to send nine of these off to the General Hospital.

The general public may only get a glimpse of the activities of the Brigade at such crowded events, but Malayans have come to expect the presence of the St. John members and to depend on their help with every confidence.

But I wonder how many of us realise the great amount of work involved in organising and training our members, or how many realise how both the membership and work of the St. John are expanding. The St. John Association awards certificates in first aid, home nursing, the clean handling of food and other subjects. In 1958 the number of new certificates and awards was 1,348; in 1959 this figures rose to 1,911, and last year to 2,527.

It costs a lot of money to maintain the operations of the St. John throughout the Federation, and it has only been possible to do so through the generosity of the public. Last year the running costs amounted to sixty-five thousand dollars. Not only is the work of St. John voluntary but the money must also be obtained by voluntary methods. St. John Association needs this money for medicines, equipment, training classes, transport, uniforms and administrative expenses.

So, naturally we turn to the Malayan public. In fact, we only make an overall general appeal to the public once a year, and the appeal for this year begins tomorrow. Our Flag Day drive will

last until October 7; so during the next ten days you will see our flag sellers visiting offices, shops, houses and schools, as well as selling flags and car stickers on the streets.

As National President of the St. John Ambulance Association I would like to appeal to you to give us your generous support by donating whatever you can conveniently afford. No amount is too small, and I may say by the same token, no amount is too great. It is my hope that business houses, associations, guilds and clubs and all other group organisations will urge their members to give something and so help to make our Flag Day drive a resounding success.

Apart from buying flags or car stickers, donations are always welcome. These can be sent either to the Honorary Secretary, St. John Ambulance Headquarters, 41 Shelley Road, Kuala Lumpur, or to me at my office, or to the Headquarters in the various States. I might mention that such donations are exempt from Income Tax assessment.

I realise, of course, that many calls are already made on your pockets, but I feel that every Malayan has a particularly soft spot for the work of St. John Ambulance. Helping our movement is really helping yourselves and your families. The more money we can raise the more good work we can do.

St. John Ambulance Association is anxious to expand in many ways and we are taking on new jobs all the time. For instance, as our particular contribution to the rural development plans, we have already begun to teach first aid and home nursing classes in some of the new land settlements. It is our ambition to see that at least one person, and preferably more, in every kampung, factory, large office or school has a good knowledge of first aid. We want to be able to extend wider knowledge of first aid, hygiene and home nursing everywhere, so that at all times and in all circumstances it may be possible to prevent loss of life or limb, or to relieve suffering until medical aid can be obtained.

In fact, I expect that the time will come when the public may well demand a knowledge of first aid from all drivers of commercial vehicles or operators of machines, and that they should be in

every factory or large commercial organisation a good first aid unit. These goals cannot be achieved without money, and our work can only continue and grow through generous assistance from the public.

Therefore, I appeal to all Malaysians to keep an eye out for our flag sellers in the next days and to do whatever you can to give your support for this great service of St. John Ambulance Association. These volunteers are a credit to the nation, and its humanitarian work they do is a cause well worthy of your support.

Thank you!