

SPEECH BY Y.B. TAN SRI FATIMAH BINTI HAJI HASHIM, MENTERI
KEBAJIKAN AM, ON THE OCCASION OF THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF
THE LEADERSHIP COURSE ORGANISED BY THE RED CROSS SOCIETY,
SINGAPORE/MALAYSIA, ON SATURDAY, 2ND DECEMBER 1972 AT THE LAT 10.00 A.M.
PUSAT LATIHAN BOMBA, KUALA KUBU BHARU

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am happy to have this opportunity of being with you all at this closing ceremony of your Youth Leadership Course and to be able to meet all the participants, particularly those from our neighbouring countries, Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand. Your presence here is not only a mark of inter-regional cooperation, but also the result of vision and foresight on the part of the organisers. With this Course, the organisers are translating into practice one of the policies of the Malaysian Red Cross Society which is to develop leadership in young people. This policy is aligned to an important objective of the Malaysian Government which is to develop our youth into competent and contributing citizens. The task is formidable when we reflect that 60 per cent of our population is below the age of 25 years. It is also an important one as the future of our country must depend on the calibre and capability of today's youth.

Another policy that the Malaysian Red Cross Society has emphasized has been that of bringing the Red Cross movement to the rural areas. I am glad therefore to note that one of the subjects discussed was the participation of youth in rural community projects. There is ample opportunity for youth to serve in the rural areas to provide leadership and to organise self-help, more importantly to instil a pride in working and living in the rural areas. Your activities in rural areas will help to bring meaning and purpose to life in these communities and therefore will, in some measure, reduce the urban rural drift which Government is also trying to minimise.

The discussions on drug abuse which were led by competent authorities must have broadened your understanding of the problems connected with narcotics. Drug experimentation and addiction can become a very serious problem and menace if we are not constantly on guard against drug trafficking and its abuse. But if the war on drug abuse is to succeed in any measure, the cooperation of parents, teachers, youth workers and every individual involved in educating the young is imperative. Positive measures taken by the Government have led to the formation of an Anti-Narcotics Bureau to check drug trafficking and to the formation of an Inter-Ministerial Committee which will identify the kinds of drug abuse, help and rehabilitate addicts as well as concentrate on preventive measures. As youth leaders, you have an important role to play. You can disseminate knowledge on the dangerous effect of drug abuse and experimentation. Your activities in themselves, wholesome, creative and meaningful, can help the individuals you associate with, to become better developed persons with a more meaningful purpose in life. And because of this, better able to handle the mal-adjusted to seek temporary relief in the euphoria of drugs. I also understand that many of you are teachers and therefore are in a position of authority, understanding and influence to play your role in helping to keep young people away from drugs.

Those of you who are in the Red Cross movement can be justifiably proud of being part of a world-wide organisation with a long tradition of service which also enjoys the universal support and acceptance of peoples of all countries and walks of life. If the Founder of the Red Cross movement could see the Malaysian Red Cross today, he would find that the tradition of

selfless service is being perpetuated. The recent floods in Kuala Lumpur witnessed a great willingness and readiness of the Malaysian Red Cross to serve. In the emergencies and crises of the past, the Malaysian Red Cross was among the first, if not the first, on the scene in disaster relief. But the great Founder of the movement in looking at the activities of the Malaysian Red Cross Society would see that while the tradition has been preserved, the form of service has been changed. The 999 24-hour ambulance service, the mobile kitchen unit which can cook sufficient food for 250 persons at a time are unique to the Malaysian Red Cross, and born of the local conditions here. This is as it should be. To remain dynamic, the Malaysian Red Cross has constantly to experiment with programmes and services to suit the Malaysian scene and the Malaysian need. Thus it has launched, for example, a pilot nutrition scheme in Bachok in Kelantan where youth members have distributed high protein biscuits to students. As I have said earlier, the Malaysian Red Cross is also now concentrating on activities that will develop potential and leadership in our young people.

I hope therefore that you will be proud to have participated in this Course and will be inspired to implement what you have learned and been taught in such a way that you will, whether Red Cross members or not, perpetuate the Red Cross tradition of selfless service. I hope that you have enjoyed the Course and found it worthwhile and interesting.

With this I have pleasure in closing the Course.