

- 7 MAR 1977

DIRECTOR CENTRAL NARCOTICS BUREAU'S ADDRESS FOR
THE OPENING OF NADAC MONTH ON 4 AUGUST 1976 -
AT NATIONAL THEATRE

Acc. No.	NARC
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Hon. Dep. P M and Minister for Defence Dr Goh,
The President of the SANA and Chairman of NADAC 76 Dr Tow,
Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On 28 Apr 1975, the New Nation carried a front page article captioned "Heroin Hell" in which I was quoted that I predict that heroin abuse in Singapore if not checked (in the next 2 or 3 years) could leave a trail of about 5,000 hard-core addicts within 5 years. There had only been 10 heroin arrests in 1973, and 110 in 1974. However, in 1975 the figure rose to 2,263. During the 1st 6 months of this year, out of a total of 2,827 persons arrested for suspected drug offences, 2,284 persons were arrested for heroin. 91% of these persons were under 30 years of age. If this escalation continues it is with great regret that I say that my prediction that there will be about 5,000 hard-core addicts in 1980 will come true.

Much publicity has been given on the Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Act, 1975 where the death penalty is provided for certain offences including trafficking above certain amounts of heroin and morphine. In spite of this, in the 1st 6 months of this year, out of 81 persons charged for trafficking in drugs 58 were charged for trafficking in heroin. 18 persons are awaiting trial and will face the death penalty if convicted; one person has already been sentenced to death. Of these 19 persons, 17 were trafficking in heroin. All of them knew of the provision of the death penalty in the law.

We cannot stop people who want to risk their necks for fast profits. But these traffickers can only prosper if they have an expanding market. Like any other business, there will be sellers as long as there are buyers. The point that I wish to make is that if we in Singapore continue to take a lenient attitude towards drug abusers, we will never solve our drug abuse problem. Most of the young people will continue their drug-taking

unless they are compelled to stop. Our experience has shown that drug abusers and addicts who are charged in court and on conviction are fined, usually continue with their drug-taking habits. If we do not take hard measures now, it will be too late in a few years time. Enforcement, if backed up by meaningful sentences meted out by the courts can do much as a short-term measure in controlling the drug abuse problem in Singapore.

I am not saying that the hard line alone is the solution to solving the drug abuse problem. As a long term measure, young people must be provided with life-enriching experiences, both physical and mental. They must be provided with positive values and attitudes with which to evaluate the influences they are subjected to. These values can help provide them with some sort of measure or standard in assessing the influences around them. These values can also help them in making the right decisions in life. In a world of increasing ease and rapidity of communication and where we cannot protect our children from negative cultural influences, the inculcation of positive values and attitudes very early in life is the best possible protection we can offer against drug abuse.

At this point, I want to congratulate SANA for taking steps in the right direction in the long-term measure against drug abuse. Creating awareness amongst the public on the drug abuse problem, its dangers and consequences is the first step towards educating the people. But SANA has gone further than this. With NADAC '76, SANA has aroused community participation, which is very important in any program for drug abuse prevention and control.

But what happens after this? What is the role of the community after all has been said on the drug abuse problem? The prevention and control of drug abuse must be an on-going process. It must involve reinforcing the work being done by the

existing institutions in the community. These include the home, schools, counselling agencies, religious institutions and the mass media. Other than the schools, all these agencies can provide life-enriching experiences especially for the out-of-school youth which is a very important but often neglected sector. Many of our youths are aimless, and have little understanding of themselves or of others. The majority of the institutions that they have been subjected to in the past have done little to help them in coping with life. This should not be so, for in the ultimate analysis, the problem of drug abuse is a problem of people and not of drugs.

In closing I would like to stress that success in any anti-drug abuse campaign can only be measured by the desired behavioural changes. I sincerely hope that we shall see such changes, especially in our youth.