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SPEECH BY MR S JAYAKUMAR, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS AND
SECOND MINISTER FOR LAW, ON THE OCCASION OF THE BEDOK BLOOD
GROUPING EXERCISE HELD AT BEDOK COMMUNITY CENTRE
ON SUNDAY, 14 JULY 1985 AT 9.00 AM

Why is Civil Defence important in Singapore? There are several reasons:

First, if our population is psychologically and physically prepared and trained for civil defence this, combined with credible military defence, should deter others from having belligerent designs against us.

Secondly, a credible civil defence will boost the morale of our population.

Thirdly, the morale of our fighting men in SAF will be uplifted if they know there is an organised plan for civilians which includes their own families.

Fourthly, in the eventuality of armed conflict, this will help to minimise deaths and injuries.

Civil Defence must therefore be taken seriously.

But people should not think that all there is to civil defence is CD Volunteer Schemes in constituencies limited to fire fighting, first-aid etc. There are many other facets of civil defence which are being studied such as: what should be the shelter system? How will food be distributed? What will be the plan in the event of power or water supplies being affected? How would medical services be maintained? So, as you can see, we are looking into the entire range of preparedness in emergencies. It represents one side of the Total Defence effort, to complement the other side of military defence.

Why does the Government place such an emphasis on public participation in civil defence. Why not leave it entirely to the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF)? In an emergency, the surest help available comes from ourselves, our own family members or the neighbours around us. So, while the SCDF and the other agencies like the Police and Fire Service are professionally trained to respond to emergencies, it is in the interest of everyone to be ready and to know just how to help himself, his family and his neighbours rather than to depend entirely on professional help. This calls for our residents to be properly organised and trained in fundamental but essential skills like first-aid, fire-fighting, rescue and evacuation.

Towards this objective, the Civil Defence Volunteer Scheme was introduced in 1982 for every constituency to recruit volunteers for training in civil defence skills. Under this Scheme, volunteers recruited are taught basic skills like first-aid, fire-fighting, rescue and evacuation by SCDF instructors over 10 sessions of one-hour each, spread over three months. Many trained in such skills are also finding them relevant and useful to cope with some daily incidents like home fires, road accidents and other personal accidents. In Bedok Constituency, like other constituencies, the response for volunteers is excellent. The good response to the Civil Defence Volunteer Scheme in most constituencies has, in fact, resulted in a challenge to SCDF in having to cope with the training of the volunteers. The challenge is not only in training the large numbers of volunteers but also in interacting with grassroots organisations and understanding the attitudes, enthusiasm as well as limits of volunteers. The volunteers, on their part, have the challenge of becoming a dynamic constituency group that must work closely with the SCDF.

Some of these problems can be overcome by imaginative solutions. For example, the problem of training large numbers of volunteers can be overcome if the CDCC forms its own corps of volunteer instructors from among those who have trained. Such volunteer instructors who would be specially selected by the CDCC, will undergo an advanced first-aid training and instruction method training to qualify as instructors for basic civil defence skills. These volunteer instructors can then train other civil defence volunteers. This approach has been tried out in Bedok and other constituencies are also exploring the idea.

Regarding today's Blood Grouping Exercise, I am glad to see many of you taking precious time off from your weekend rest to be here at our Constituency's Blood Grouping Exercise.

I do not know how many will come today. But this is not a competition between constituencies. What is important is that people are aware of what this Blood Grouping Exercise is all about. Judging from the response in other exercises, I am confident that Singaporeans realise the importance of knowing their own blood groups. The keen response and active participation from Singaporeans to the current national blood grouping exercise augurs well for our nation's preparedness to face the worst while we hope and strive for the best.

On this note, I would like to thank all members of the Bedok CDCC and other grassroots leaders, civil defence volunteers and SCDF officers who have helped organise this Blood Grouping Exercise for Bedok residents, and for bringing us a step closer towards achieving our objective of building a safe Singapore.

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