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**SPEECH BY DR LEE BOON YANG,
MINISTER FOR LABOUR, SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE,
AND ACTING MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS
AT THE CIVIL DEFENCE MONTH RECEPTION 1993
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 29 SEP 93
AT 8.00 PM AT THE KALLANG THEATRE**

Commissioner SCDF,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

1. It is my pleasure to join all of you in commemorating the eleventh year of the establishment of the Civil Defence programme in Singapore. While eleven years is a relatively short time, the growth and development of Civil Defence has been quite remarkable.

The Presence of CD in our Environment

2. Starting from November 1982, Civil Defence has grown continuously from strength to strength and today, we can see it making its presence felt in our daily lives. We have civil defence shelters in the underground MRT stations and in new HDB estates. The high-tech sirens of the Public Warning System are also a common feature on the roof-tops of many of our homes. In addition, emergency exercises of various types - rescue, food and fuel rationing, water distribution and sheltering - are conducted periodically at different parts of Singapore. Just three weeks ago, the Nationwide Blood Exercise attracted over four thousand blood donors. Even more importantly, it made Singaporeans aware of the importance of donating blood and familiarised us with emergency blood donation procedures. Many of us are now either a CD reservist, a CD Volunteer or trained in some basic CD skills and emergency procedures.

SCDF to Serve the Nation

3. In the SCDF, we now have an organisation to lead and spearhead emergency preparedness. The SCDF has continually risen to the occasion in many incidents over the past years. Fighting fires, rescuing trapped people and providing medical aid to the injured are now a daily routine.

Keeping Ahead of the Changes

4. Keeping abreast of the needs of a changing environment, SCDF has also embarked on several new programmes to enhance its services to the people. The Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (DART), capable of carrying out complex and difficult rescue operations, is one example. DART has not only the capability to help our people but also, if there is a need, they can be quickly deployed to help our neighbouring countries as well.

5. The establishment of the Fast Response Medic (FRM) service to combat delays in response along our busy roads is another example. The FRM has consistently proven itself by helping slice critical minutes off the response time, thus enhancing the chances of survival of the victims in road traffic accidents. The FRM service has been so successful that the SCDF has recently expanded it to cover even the fringe areas where traffic is not as heavy. With the FRM complementing the Emergency Ambulance Service, pre-hospital medical care provided by the SCDF has been greatly improved.

Importance of Emergency Planning

6. The SCDF is also constantly engaged in emergency planning to handle the different major incidents. Contingency plans for every conceivable type of accident that could occur in Singapore have been developed together with the Police and the other emergency agencies. This investment in emergency planning has already started to reap benefits for our people.

7. An example was the handling of the recent MRT accident at the Clementi MRT station. Many agencies, including the SCDF,

Police, SMRT, MOH and the SAF were involved. Rescue teams, ambulance crews, medical supplies and other resources and expertise were summoned to the scene almost instantaneously. Drills previously exercised amongst the various emergency agencies were quickly put into action and within an hour, the whole operation covering search and rescue, medical treatment and evacuation of the more than 150 casualties was completed.

The Public's Role

8. Ladies & gentlemen, as we now move into the next decade of the Civil Defence programme, we must take stock of the past effort and look to the future. For the Civil Defence programme, apart from having an effective SCDF to lead and guide the population, the ultimate goal is to have it as an integral part of our lives. To do that, I urge every Singaporean - young and old, men and women - to do their part for the defence and emergency preparedness of our nation. It can only be achieved through your commitment and dedication.

Grassroots' Help Needed

9. In this respect, CDCCs and volunteers have, over the years, played instrumental roles. You have firstly helped the public to appreciate the need for and importance of Civil Defence. Surveys conducted year after year have clearly indicated that our people accept the need for emergency preparedness. I would like to compliment all of you for your many years of untiring effort.

10. Secondly, you have also helped galvanise the public into action by encouraging them to learn the various emergency procedures and drills; and to take part in the various exercises, such as the recent Blood Donation exercise. Of course, more needs to be done in this area and I hope all of you - the CDCCs, CD volunteers as well as our reservists - can assist the SCDF in reaching out to the population.

Conclusion

11. Let me conclude by saying that we have taken great pains and gone to great lengths to develop the Civil Defence programme over the last decade. We are now ready to forge ahead to make Singapore an even safer place to live, work and invest in. Let's not lose momentum but instead keep on improving through the next decade of Civil Defence.

Thank you.

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