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SPEECH BY MR CHAI CHONG YII, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE  
FOR EDUCATION, AT THE SANA COMIC BOOK PRESENTATION  
CEREMONY AT CATHOLIC JUNIOR COLLEGE ON SATURDAY,  
10 FEBRUARY 1979 AT 1600 HOURS

We have been successful in suppressing the supply of illicit drugs into and within our Republic with the stringent measures taken in the past two years. Some of us may think that we have solved the drug problem in Singapore. This is, however, not so. The suppression of heroin and the opiates has driven abusers and addicts from one type of drug to another. With the scarcity of heroin and other narcotic drugs, barbiturates are presently also in demand. Thus the pattern of drug abuse has only changed. The problem remains.

The effectiveness of suppression as a measure to prevent and control the drug problem is limited so long as the demand for such drugs persists. Thus it is only in removing this demand to complement the measures taken to suppress supply that we can hope to eradicate the problem. The removal of this demand can only be achieved through the implementation of a long term programme of prevention: initially to create public awareness to the problem and, in the long run, to inculcate good and meaningful habits and values in the individual so that he is able to develop strength and self-esteem in his character and resist the temptations of not only drug abuse but also other negative pursuits in life.

The initial task of creating public awareness to the problem has, I believe, been done. The messages through the media and the various anti-drug abuse campaigns have been clear and extensive. We need nevertheless to constantly remind our youths of the consequences of drug abuse: the harm that the abuser can bring to himself and the

other social problems that are created if indulgence in such a negative habit is not checked. The comic book produced by the Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association is yet another means through which our youths may be reminded that those who abuse drugs will ruin their lives.

It is, however, inadequate to merely remind our youths of the consequences of drug abuse. Our youths would need assistance in seeking positive alternatives which cater to their socio-emotional needs. The reminder needs to be followed up and reinforced by the inculcation of both moral and civic values and good habits. This would help our youths develop a more positive attitude towards living and seek more meaningful outlets to meet their needs rather than resort to abusing drugs or indulging in negative activities. In the process of this inculcation, the youth becomes better disciplined and better adjusted to the society in which he lives. He learns to be more appreciative of the environment. He begins to have more confidence in himself and in his peers. He finds that he can cope with his problems and that his peers can accept one another without the need to resort to drugs. This is undoubtedly the more significant part of the programme working towards the removal of the demand for drugs. With the supply of drugs being successfully suppressed and the demand for them eventually removed, we can then look forward with hope to the permanent eradication of the drug-abuse problem.

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