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**SPEECH BY MR CHIN HARN TONG, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(HOME AFFAIRS), AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE ALJUNIED
SOCIAL AWARENESS EXHIBITION CUM LIBRARY AUDIO SERVICE
AT THE VOID DECK OF BLOCK 13/15 JOO SENG ROAD ON
SUNDAY, 12 APRIL 1987 AT 10.30 AM**

It gives me great pleasure to be here this morning to officiate at this Aljunied Social Awareness Exhibition cum Library Audio Service Opening Ceremony, which is organised by the Zone 'A' Residents' Committee.

Your presence here this morning speaks very much of your community spirit and of your sense of identity with and your pride in your neighbourhood. Such sense of camaraderie is prevailing among you, the residents, partly because of the community-building efforts of the Residents' Committees and other constituency grassroots organisations such as the Citizens' Consultative Committee, Community Centre Management Committee, Women Sub-Committee, Youth Groups, etc. When the majority of the Singaporeans lived in kampongs a few decades ago, there was no need to promote neighbourliness, harmony and community cohesiveness, qualities which were natural and instinctive to kampong dwellers. Neighbours were friendly and knew one another well. Doors were open to all living in the vicinity. Consequently, they formed a closely-knit community, which scored high on neighbourliness and friendliness. However, in an urbanised society like Singapore today, where people live in high-rise apartments, we need the efforts of constituency grassroots organisations to bring residents together. Thus, the Residents' Committees were born. In Aljunied Constituency, Residents' Committees were set up in 1980 to promote neighbourliness, harmony and community

cohesiveness among residents. Initially, the Residents' Committees were more preoccupied with the complaints and problems of the constituents. But once these problems have been attended to, the Residents' Committees are able to aim at a higher level of involvement and community participation. Ways and means are constantly being thought up to get the residents to be interested and to participate in community-based functions. Various sports and recreational, social, cultural and educational activities have been organised for the benefit of the residents. Of course, it is not possible to attain a sense of togetherness and a sense of belonging just through the efforts of these community organisations alone. The residents themselves also must do their part, that is, by the positive way they response to the community-building efforts.

In the final analysis, it is the residents themselves who will benefit most from this atmosphere of community spirit in their neighbourhood as a result of their keen interest and active participation in neighbourhood schemes and activities. For example, exhibitions, such as those organised today, will impart useful information to those who visit them. Such exhibitions, if organised on a regular basis, will certainly benefit the entire neighbourhood. Active participation would enhance social awareness and social responsibility among the residents. Residents have benefited from neighbourhood schemes such as the Neighbourhood Police Post, which was set up in June 1983 and the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. Following such community policing, major crimes have declined in this constituency. For example, in the last 12 months, there were 11 cases of robbery compared with 33 such cases in the 12-month period before the introduction of the Neighbourhood Police Post. Housebreaking also decreased from 36 cases during the June 1982 - May 1983 period to 21 cases during the last 12 months.

To lower our crime rate further, residents should cultivate an interest in their neighbours and show care and concern for their neighbours' properties as well. There are various ways where residents can cooperate with one another to their mutual benefit. Everyone, therefore, has an important role to play in making the Aljunied Constituency a more pleasant and caring place to live in.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who have helped in one way or another to make this exhibition possible. I now have the pleasure to declare this exhibition open.

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