

# PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR CHUA SIAN CHIN, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS, AT THE RC/SBC ROAD SHOW AT THE CAR PARK BETWEEN APT BLOCK NOS 57 AND 69 CIRCUIT ROAD ON SUNDAY, 27 MARCH 1983 AT 7.30 PM

The residents of MacPherson should be proud of the fact that their constituency has been chosen to stage the first of the third series of RC/SBC Road Shows for 1983. It is an expression of confidence on the ability of our Residents' Committees (RCs) to get together to organise it and make it a success. The large crowd of residents that have gathered here tonight fully justifies the confidence that had been placed on our RCs. I would like to commend in particular the RC Joint Working Committee who have worked very hard in organising the show.

Today's large gathering of residents also signifies the success of our RC scheme. It is not just the usual crowd who have come to see a show but it is a gathering of residents, many of whom have helped in one way or other towards the organisation of the show and some of whom will also participate in the show. It is in fact more of a gathering of families and neighbours who have got together as a community and jointly with the SBC put up a show for the enjoyment of everybody.

The RC scheme has proved to be the most important project in terms of community development in Singapore. It has provided the vital social infrastructure that has made it possible to throw up grassroot leaders among the residents in every neighbourhood of our HDB estates. It is transforming our hitherto faceless conglomeration of HDB residents who used to live their separate lives into

communities with a sense of identity. Without the RCs it would not have been possible to implement the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme (NWS) to bring the residents closer together on the basis of mutual help and cooperation. Within the period of two years all 69 constituencies with RCs have launched the NWS.

I have no doubts that the existence of RCs will smoothen the implementation of our Neighbourhood Police Post System in our HDB estates.

The successful implementation of our Civil Defence Plan will also largely depend upon the efforts of the RCs working in conjunction with the other grassroot leaders in the CCCs and MCs, in recruiting and mobilising the civilian volunteers. In fact the Volunteer Civil Defence Units or VCDU will be formed on the basis of each RC zone. The response to the recruitment exercise in the first 15 constituencies in the pilot scheme has been very good. This is largely due to the good work of the RCs and other community leaders. The recruitment effort in each constituency is directed by a Central Co-ordinating Committee comprising representatives from the RCs, CCCs, MCs and others.

To date a total of 6,096 volunteers have been recruited. In some RC zones, the target number of 100 volunteers for each RC zone has been exceeded. Training has started in 13 out of the 15 constituencies. Training of volunteers in the remaining two constituencies will soon start. Attendance at the training sessions have been good and the volunteers have shown keenness in their training.

This first batch of volunteers are mainly from a list of potential volunteers who have some relevant experience in first aid, rescue or fire-fighting. They include persons such as ex-nurses, ex-firemen or those who had been in organisations such as the Vigilante Corps and Special

Constabulary, St. John Ambulance Brigade and the Red Cross. There are, however, only 471 housewives in this first batch.

We have now prepared a plan for the second phase of the recruitment exercise. It will cover the rest of the residents and in particular it will concentrate on the recruitment of housewives. It will be a massive exercise to be conducted by way of house to house visits by RCs and other community leaders. I cannot over-emphasise the point that the more residents we have involved in Civil Defence, not only will our Civil Defence outfit be stronger but what is even more important is that we will be assured of a more orderly and less of a panicky response on the part of our civilian population to an emergency.

Let me also explain how important it is for our housewives in particular to participate in Civil Defence. By joining in they will not only be contributing to our national Civil Defence effort but will be learning something useful and relevant that will enable them to meet hazards and emergencies such as fires which can occur in their own homes. According to our Fire Service statistics compiled for a period of 15 months ending 31 March 1980, out of 1,336 cases of fires occurring in buildings, 944 or 70 per cent of them occurred in homes. Of the 944 cases, 316 of them arose out of the overheating of food, 56 from sparks flying from stoves and 12 as a result of burning joss paper. These cases should particularly concern our housewives. There are also quite a number of cases which resulted from an electrical short circuit.

The plan for the vast majority of our housewife volunteers is only to teach them how to use a fire-extinguisher so that they can put out a small fire in their home before it can spread. Learning to use an extinguisher is very simple. It will not take much time. Our target is

to get almost every housewife to learn how to use a fire-extinguisher. Here again we can learn something from the Japanese. In Japan there are 26,000 women's groups with a membership of eight million who are trained in fire-fighting. Almost all the housewives in Japan know how to use a fire-extinguisher.

The Civil Defence Central Co-ordinating Committee in MacPherson has already launched this second phase recruitment exercise. So far the response from our housewives is good. I urge the rest of the housewives in MacPherson to come forward and get themselves trained on how to use fire-extinguishers so that they can equip themselves to put out fires before it can spread and burn down their homes. I believe the rest of the 14 constituencies in the pilot scheme will soon follow suit.

I am glad to say that our Civil Defence Plan has kept to its schedule as targetted. We have already selected the second group of 15 constituencies to be brought into the Civil Defence Scheme. They will launch their recruitment exercise in May this year. In the meantime, community leaders in these constituencies will be approached to set up their respective Civil Defence Co-ordinating Committee to direct the recruitment of volunteers. (Names of the 15 constituencies are set out in the Annex.).

Finally, I would like to thank the sponsor of the show and all those who have worked very hard to make this show possible.

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ANNEX

Delta  
Radin Mas  
Potong Pasir  
Whampoa  
Kolam Ayer  
Aljunied  
Telok Blangah  
Leng Kee  
Chong Boon  
Kim Seng  
Jalan Kayu  
Tampines  
Kampong Chai Chee  
Pasir Panjang  
Clementi

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