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Acc No	NARC
83	0052 17

Release No: 46/SEP
11-1/83/09/23

SPEECH BY MR CHUA SIAN CHIN, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS
AT THE CIVIL DEFENCE WEEK RECEPTION AT POLICE ACADEMY
HALL ON FRIDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 1983 AT 1930 HOURS

About 11 months have passed since we launched the Civil Defence Scheme. Thirty constituencies are now actively involved in the scheme. The rest will be brought in over the next two years. Our target of recruiting 100 volunteers per RC zone has been achieved for the first 15 constituencies. In several RC zones, the number of volunteers had even exceeded the targetted number. We now have 11,029 volunteers made up of 7,341 in the first 15 constituencies, and 3,688 in the second 15 constituencies. They comprise 10.8 per cent housewives, 11.1 per cent secondary school students, 30.5 per cent former part-time national servicemen and 47.6 per cent other residents. We can be proud of the fact that our citizens have responded enthusiastically by coming forward to serve in our Volunteer Civil Defence Units (VCDU).

For a start the volunteers have been given basic training in fire fighting, first aid, rescue work and evacuation procedures. To date about 236 volunteers have completed the six-month basic Civil Defence course. In time we will enlarge this pool of trained volunteers proficient in basic Civil Defence skills and functions in every RC zone. The more trained volunteers there are in an RC zone, the greater are the chances of survival of its residents and their families in times of war. This is because they would be better organised to look after themselves and there would be less panic and confusion.

After the completion of basic training, the interest of the volunteers must be sustained by some continuing programme. This could either be by way of more specialised training in particular skills in Civil Defence or being given certain duties to perform during peacetime. This was discussed at the recent National RC Conference when the subject of Civil Defence came up. They proposed that volunteers be allowed to perform duties in peacetime that will correspond to what they have to do during an emergency. Acting on this proposal, the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) attached 60 Civil Defence volunteers to SAF first-aid teams at the six National Day Parade Centres to gain experience in the handling of real casualties.

The SCDF is considering involving volunteers in crowd control at constituency functions. Such experience will be useful in an emergency when they have to handle and direct fellow residents in an air-raid, during evacuation and fire fighting drills. In addition, there will be annual Civil Defence exercises to be conducted jointly by the Civil Defence volunteers, reservists and residents. This should develop in every RC zone the esprit de corps among the various Civil Defence Units, the grassroot leaders and the residents so that everyone will discharge his responsibility as a member of a team.

In implementing our Civil Defence Scheme we have so far concentrated on the recruitment of civilian volunteers and teaching them basic Civil Defence skills for evacuation, fire fighting, rescue work and rendering first aid. By being so equipped they will be able during an emergency to prevent further damage and minimise casualties and loss of lives. However, the scope and role of Civil Defence is very much wider than this. It covers the whole range of essential activities during a war to ensure the survival of the population. The objective is to enable civilian life to carry on as close to normal as possible. This is the only

way to maintain high morale among the civilian population which will also boost the morale of our fighting men.

Those of you who are old enough to remember the Second World War will know that essential supplies such as food, electricity and water would be disrupted during a war. Thus our Civil Defence Scheme must include plans to meet these problems. These plans will involve our VCDUs and Civil Defence reservists in a number of roles in this important area of work which is vital to our survival in war. It is appropriate for them to be involved since they are in close contact and working relationship with the other residents of their RC zones.

One of the most important role concerns food rationing. The Government must ensure that in the event of war there is not only an adequate stock of food but also that the basic food items are properly and fairly distributed to the population. This requires a food rationing system which will prevent and minimise hoarding and black marketing. In an emergency every household will have to be notified quickly to register for and be issued with ration cards. This is not only a massive operation but can also be complicated if particulars of households are not accurately recorded. Here our VCDUs and Civil Defence reservists can play an important role in serving the registration notices for rations to every household in their RC zone and also help to verify that the particulars of each household are accurate so that no one eligible is left out. To ensure the smooth implementation of the rationing plan in the event of a war, we must conduct regular exercises during peacetime.

During a war, water mains can be expected to be damaged. Stoppage of electricity supply will also cause water supply to households at higher floors of HDB flats to be cut off. The supply and distribution of water to the

residents from taps or mobile water tanks is an essential Civil Defence responsibility. To ensure there will be fair distribution of water, the residents must be organised to go down and collect the water in an orderly manner. Here again the VCDUs and Civil Defence reservists will have to be involved in the organisation in their respective RC zones. For this we have also planned for regular exercises so that VCDUs and residents would know what to do in an emergency.

Another important role which our VCDUs will be involved in is the mustering of blood donors from among the civilian population in their respective RC zones. Collecting blood during war or an emergency is another essential responsibility of Civil Defence. The large casualties both military and civilian that can be expected require large quantities of blood for transfusion to save lives. The stocks that are kept at our Blood Transfusion Bank can only satisfy peacetime needs. Further, most of the blood donors in peacetime now come from among our national servicemen and our uniform services. Thus, to meet the much greater demand for blood during a war, we need more civilian donors. To achieve this, it is necessary in peacetime to organise and build up a permanent relationship between the community leaders, Civil Defence organisation and Health authorities down to the level of every RC zone.

Our Civil Defence Force, with the support of the grassroot organisations and aided by VCDUs, will participate in blood donation drives, organise residents to donate their blood, and assist in the actual blood transfusion exercises. This will ensure that blood collection works out smoothly in war or in an emergency, that our people are familiar with the procedures and that the Health authorities will have the necessary auxiliary assistants. The first joint Civil Defence/Blood Transfusion Service Blood Donation Drive, involving the combined efforts of grassroot leaders, VCDUs and reservists, will take place in November 1983.

The VCDU Scheme could not have been implemented successfully without the wholehearted support of the Members of Parliament and the community leaders especially those who form the Civil Defence Coordinating Committees (CDCCs). They oversee the recruitment and training programme of each constituency. In many instances, they personally made house to house visits to persuade residents to join the VCDU. It was this personal touch which accounted for the very good response from the residents. Most important of all, they set the example as community leaders by being among the first volunteers for the VCDUs.

The CDCCs will be a crucial link in our ability to ensure that life can continue as normal as possible and civilian morale kept high under even the most trying situation in an emergency or war. As we enlarge the scope of Civil Defence at community level, the position of our VCDUs will be enhanced in importance in discharging their role as leaders of the civilian community in a crisis.

This evening, the Government gives public recognition to the important role played by the CDCCs in laying the foundation of an effective Civil Defence capability at grassroot level. The presentation of certificates of appreciation to the Chairmen of these CDCCs is a gesture of our appreciation.

I take this opportunity to thank all Members of Parliament, the Chairmen and Members of the Civil Defence Coordinating Committees for their support and contribution to make our Civil Defence Scheme a success.
