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SPEECH BY MR CHUA SIAN CHIN, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS, AT
THE LAUNCHING OF THE CIVIL DEFENCE SENIOR CITIZENS' TRAINING
PROGRAMME AT MACPHERSON COMMUNITY CENTRE ON SUNDAY,
22 JANUARY 1984 AT 3.00 PM

Since the implementation of the Civil Defence (CD) Plan in November 1982 much progress has been made in the recruitment and training of CD volunteers. To date a total of 13,527 volunteers have joined our Volunteer Civil Defence Units (VCDUs) in the 30 constituencies which have been brought into our CD programme. 1,742 of them have completed their six months' basic CD course. More will be completing their basic course soon. An advanced CD course has been planned for those who are interested in upgrading their CD skills further by more specialised training.

The successful build-up of the VCDUs has largely been brought about through the efforts of the Residents' Committees (RCs) going around recruiting in their respective RC zones. The approach has been to appeal directly to the residents within each RC zone to join the VCDU so that they could be trained and equipped to deal with emergency situations within their neighbourhood. After this initial move, we realised that it was also necessary to supplement this effort by embarking upon a different approach to concurrently reach out to other specific groups. The specific target groups that we had in mind were secondary school students, housewives and our senior citizens. They are the main groups of our population who are at home most of the time and thus form the first line of defence against any disaster occurring in the home either in peace time or during a war. Their active participation in our CD Programme is therefore extremely crucial.

The Student Civil Defence Programme has been going on since February 83. To date 136 schools have participated in the programme. Because of their large numbers they were given lectures and shown the basic techniques of fire-fighting by way of demonstration instead of being given individual training. However, the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) has in conjunction with the NPCC Council devised another programme to train over 9,000 senior NPCC members in Civil Defence. A similar CD training programme has already been introduced for members of our Boys' Club as part of the activities of the Club. After their training the boys will join their parents and friends in the various VCDUs of their RC zone.

In April 83 we launched the scheme to bring our next specific target group, the housewives, into our CD Programme. In order to make it attractive and convenient to our housewives, we devised for them a special training programme that would also be useful to them in daily life. It is a one-session training package which concentrates on fire-fighting and in particular, how to meet the hazards of fire in the kitchen. To date, 2,107 housewives have completed this course.

We have now embarked on the plan to bring in large numbers of our senior citizens into our Civil Defence Programme. The active participation of our senior citizens in our CD Programme is essential in ensuring its success. This is not only because being always at home, they would be the first to face any emergency situation in the home, but their years of experience should also enable them to provide the leadership and prevent panic in meeting the emergency. Further, those of them who are 50 years and above would also be able to draw upon their three and a half years of valuable experience of World War II.

This CD Programme for senior citizens has been formulated in conjunction with the Singapore Action Group of Elders (SAGE), the People's Association and the RC Central Secretariat. Between SAGE, PA and RC Central Secretariat, they control 52 Senior Citizens' Clubs or Groups with a total membership of 7,800 (See Appendix A). By end of this year another 14 Senior Citizens' Clubs are expected to be formed, thus broadening the membership further. Some members of our Senior Citizens' Groups have already been recruited into our VCDUs on an individual basis and some 300 of them have completed their basic CD training. However, to involve large numbers of them it is necessary to make the approach through their established clubs. This will enable them to be enrolled in groups and be trained together with their peers and friends. The membership of the Senior Citizens' Club is usually comprised of persons in the age group of 45 years and above. From our population estimate in June 83, the number of persons in this age group is 483,000 or about 19 per cent of our total population. Their massive participation will significantly strengthen our Civil Defence capability.

The training programme has also been formulated in consultation with SAGE, PA and the RC Secretariat. It is specially designed to allow for flexibility to be exercised in matters such as medium of instruction and frequency of training to cater for the requirements and convenience of different groups. The training programme covers three parts and they are Fire-Fighting, Basic First Aid and Evacuation Drill. They are all within the capability of our senior citizens. The training will be conducted on one subject a week, the session lasting about an hour. It will therefore be completed in three weeks.

After completion of their training programme our senior citizens will join the VCDUs in their respective RC zones if they are not already a member. Those who are

interested and have attended the requisite Civil Defence courses will be invited to volunteer their services as instructors.

Besides MacPherson, four other constituencies, Boon Lay, Bedok, Leng Kee and Moulmein will be launching this Civil Defence Training Programme for our senior citizens. For a start SAGE plans to have 300 members trained in batches of 40.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank SAGE, PA and the RC Central Secretariat for their participation and support in this critical area of recruitment and training of our CD volunteers. The successful outcome of this programme will be yet another significant step forward in our Civil Defence build-up and bring us nearer to realising our goal for the Total Defence of Singapore.

APPENDIX A

Senior Citizens' Clubs/Groups

SAGE	3	1,500
PA	26	4,500
RC	23	1,800