

# Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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**SPEECH BY MR LIM CHEE ONN, MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO,  
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NATIONAL ANTI-DRUG  
ABUSE CAMPAIGN '83 (NADAC '83) EXHIBITION  
HELD AT THE BUKIT MERAH BRANCH LIBRARY  
ON FRIDAY, 22 APRIL 1983 AT 8.00 PM**

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Drug abuse as a social disease would have undermined the foundation of our society had we allow it to spread unchecked. Fortunately, through the concerted effort of the Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association (SANA), community leaders, parents, various religious and social organisations, and the Government, we have contained the problem. Nonetheless, our efforts to prevent this social disease of drug abuse from spreading must continue unabated if we are to prevent it from destroying the social fabric that provides the cohesive strength for our nation.

Statistics and case histories have shown that the drug problem is present at all levels of our society. As such, we must involve as many people as possible in the fight against drug abuse. Indeed the individual and social costs of drug abuse are real and significant.

The reasons for total involvement by the community to contain and, if possible, eradicate this social disease are clear. It has been observed that drug abusers perform poorly in training and in work, even during their short periods of lucidity. Uncontrolled spread of drug abuse will therefore erode the very foundation of our economic progress, namely our workforce. We must therefore make sure that our workers are not caught in the grip of drug abuse.

There is also evidence to show that there is a direct relationship between widespread drug abuse and a high crime rate. Owing to a compulsive craving for drugs, addicts take to theft, robbery and other forms of crime to get money to buy drugs. Women often resort to prostitution.

Hence, it must be made clear to Singaporeans that drug abuse is a problem that concerns all of us and is not merely a problem of the addict and his family. Hence for the National Anti-Drug Abuse Campaign '83 to succeed we must encourage more people to participate in it.

Over the past few years, SANA has adopted a two-pronged approach to curb drug abuse. Firstly, through preventive education programmes and activities, and secondly, to provide aftercare to all the ex-drug takers through its Volunteer Aftercare and Counselling Service.

The thrust of these two approaches is the involvement of the community in the prevention of drug abuse and rehabilitation of ex-drug takers. As I have explained earlier, we must encourage every citizen to be involved in this fight against drug abuse because it is in our interest to do so.

To-date, SANA has been fairly successful in encouraging community leaders, parents, professionals and the average citizen to participate in its efforts to reduce drug abuse. Many have helped to educate the public, especially the young, on the harmful effects of drug abuse through on-going preventive education programmes. Others offer their services as Volunteer Aftercare Officers (VAOs) to help reintegrate the ex-drug addict into society and assist him to lead a useful life. There are now 1,495 VAOs supported by 42 full-time staff in this work. While the response has been encouraging, much more can be achieved if a greater number of volunteers come forward to help educate parents and children on the harmful effects of drug abuse or to serve as VAOs.

A more informed public about the treatment and rehabilitation programme and the undesirable social effects of widespread drug abuse will encourage more members of the public to support the many drug abuse prevention programmes. Some may even join up as VAOs or help to conduct activities for children to prevent them from falling into the grip of drug abuse. This is the aim of NADAC '83.

I hope that as the NADAC '83 campaign gets on its way, more concerned citizens from all walks of life will come forward to join in this fight against the spread of this social disease of drug abuse. When we succeed in doing this, our community will be that much more healthy and vibrant. We can all contribute towards this so that we will be spared the social misery and chaos that have plagued many a city where drug abuse is rampant and uncontrollable. We owe it to ourselves and our children to make this effort to ensure that our nation remains full of vigour and good health.

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