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**SPEECH BY MR PHUA BAH LEE, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(DEFENCE), AT THE CIVIL DEFENCE PRESENTATION OF
CERTIFICATES AT THE KRETA AYER COMMUNITY CENTRE
ON SUNDAY, 1 DECEMBER 1985 AT 10 AM**

The escalating number of fires occurring in homes every year is a subject of grave concern. Statistics show that during the three-year period 1972-84, fires in homes rose from 1,915 to 2,248 or 17.4 per cent increase.

As at 6 November this year, 21 people have perished in fires. Twenty of these victims died in fires occurring in the home environment! One hundred and thirty-one were also injured in fires during this period.

The recent tragic fire that killed nine people in Temple Street has once again reminded us of the deadly potential of an uncontrolled fire. I sincerely sympathise with the bereaved families of those killed in this fire and I would like to exhort all residents in our constituency, to take all positive steps to eliminate fire hazards in their homes and observe fire prevention rules strictly.

A four-phase programme is being worked out by the Singapore Fire Service in conjunction with grassroots organisations of Kreta Ayer, ie the CCC, RCs and CDCCs, to interest residents on the importance of fire safety and prepare them to deal with fire emergencies.

In Phase I of the programme, a home fire safety exhibition will be staged in Chinatown area.

In Phase II, fire officers accompanied by community leaders will pay house visits to propagate the fire safety message to the residents. Inspection of the premises will be made during these visits and residents will be advised on safe practices.

In Phase III of the programme, officers from the Singapore Fire Service together with leaders of the Kreta Ayer grassroots organisations will review fire dangers in old residential structures and discuss ways and means of eliminating, if not minimising, fire risk in such buildings.

In the final phase of the programme, volunteer fire squads comprising members from the Kreta Ayer CCC, RC, CDCC and residents will be formed to undergo proper training in fire fighting and rescue by the Fire Service.

Owing to the nature of construction of the old buildings and the fact that many old people are residing in these houses, it becomes crucial for the residents to organise themselves into "fire squads" to help tackle any outbreak at its incipient stages and effect rescue of any trapped persons.