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Singapore Government

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SPEECH BY MR PETER SUNG, MINISTER OF STATE FOR
(FOREIGN AFFAIRS) AND (NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT),
AT THE EXERCISE COMMUNITY SPIRIT 12 AT BUONA VISTA CLOSE
(CARPARK) ON SATURDAY, 25 MARCH 1989 AT 5.45 PM

I am indeed delighted to be here this evening to witness this Exercise Community Spirit.

The most dramatic exercise in civil defence we had seen was at the Hotel New World disaster. Many of us saw on TV the gallant efforts of the various uniformed groups working cooperatively with civilians to try to save the lives of those trapped under the collapsed building. It was a great effort. Those who participated in that exercise have earned our respect.

Can we be sure that Hotel New World will be the last disaster? The newspapers constantly remind us that disasters can strike at any time. Floods, earthquakes, aircraft crashes and other disasters happen without notice.

It would therefore be useful for us to have a credible and comprehensive civil defence system. In times of disaster, this will help us:

- to protect our citizens, and
- to conduct rescue operations and save lives.

The National Civil Defence Plan was initiated in 1982. During the last six-and-a-half years,

- (a) we have built up an effective civil defence system;

- (b) we have accepted civil defence as part of our life style; and
- (c) we have become aware of the importance and need for a credible civil defence system. We now understand we have to prepare ourselves and take steps to organise our human and other resources in peace time so that we have a capable Civil Defence Force for any emergency.

We have trained ourselves thoroughly. Now that we have the skills, we hope never to have to use them. But, we cannot be unprepared. This is why we need to conduct exercises from time to time.

We are gathered here this evening to witness the 12th large-scale Civil Defence Exercise. This exercise is code named Exercise Community Spirit. It was first conducted in May 1984. It aims:

- (a) to test the coordination and operational capabilities of the SCDF and other CD-related agencies; and
- (b) to enhance the readiness of our CD system.

The Exercise has proven to be immensely beneficial.

- (a) It enables the CD officers, reservists, volunteers and residents to work closely as a team;
- (b) It vividly demonstrates, in terms of real life situation, what could happen in an emergency; and
- (c) It shows how we, as residents, should respond to assist the authorities in ensuring safety in a crisis.

As we put our hearts and minds together to support our Civil Defence, we can be sure that our lives and property will be well protected should a mishap occur. On this note, I wish to thank:

- (a) the grassroots leaders and the SCDF for jointly organising this Exercise;
- (b) the volunteers and residents for their participation and cooperation; and
- (c) all others for making this Exercise a success.

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