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HEARTS *of* RESILIENCE

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HEARTS *of* RESILIENCE

**Singapore's
Community
Engagement
Programme**

by Asad-ul Iqbal Latif



INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES
Singapore

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30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Pasir Panjang
Singapore 119614

E-mail : publish@iseas.edu.sg

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Message



The 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001 were a wake-up call to governments around the world, alerting them to the threat of extremism and jihadist terrorism. Three months later, we in Singapore uncovered a local cell of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) regional terrorist network. The JI group was then actively assisting Al-Qaeda in preparations to attack several foreign establishments here. Fortunately, timely action by our security agencies foiled the planned terrorist attacks.

This episode motivated us to review comprehensively our plans for dealing with extremist violence. We upgraded our security forces and deepened international cooperation on terrorism issues. We also identified the critical need to maintain strong and enduring community ties. Even a near-miss like the JI plot had threatened to sow fear and mistrust among our different races. The Government had to engage community leaders to calm the ground, and get Singaporeans to see the threat for what it was — acts by misguided extremist individuals and not a threat posed by Islam or Muslims in general. Had the terrorists succeeded in carrying through their attacks, our social fabric would have come under tremendous strain, and might well have been torn asunder.

We thus embarked on the Community Engagement Programme (CEP) in 2006 to build community resilience from the ground up. The CEP aims to bring Singaporeans closer together and build networks of trust, so that in a crisis we would stand strong and united, as one people, one nation, one Singapore.



I am heartened by the positive response to the CEP. Many individuals and organizations have signed up, undergone training and taken part in exercises. Some have even launched their own programmes, widening the reach of the CEP, and bringing more people onboard.

We must sustain the momentum of CEP expansion. We must continue to reach out and convey the key CEP messages to Singaporeans from all walks of life. We must never take for granted the harmony that Singapore has enjoyed over the past four decades. Instead, we must continue to build strong bonds across our different communities, strengthen our shared Singapore identity and work together to achieve a bright future for all.

This book is a timely record of the thinking behind the CEP, and of its basic elements. It should be read not only by those directly involved in the CEP, but by all Singaporeans, to understand its importance and to help protect our precious harmony.

Lee Hsien Loong
Prime Minister

Foreword



The earthquake and tsunami that hit northeastern Japan in March 2011 and the record number of tornadoes that swept across the United States of America, remind us yet again of the importance of being prepared for disasters and emergencies. Many perish, and countless are left homeless in such crises, but being prepared means that many more who might have perished survived. Those who survive must strive to move on and rebuild their lives.

How would Singaporeans react if faced with similar disasters or other civil emergencies? What if there is a terrorist attack and the perpetrators are home-grown? Would our social fabric hold? Are we resilient enough to bounce back quickly? These are not easy questions to answer. Under the Community Engagement Programme (CEP), we try to weave a network of trust in good times so that over time, we have a resilient network ready for emergencies, which will allow us to answer these questions positively and with confidence.

The CEP began as an initiative to preserve and strengthen communal harmony, which would come under strain in the event of a terrorist attack. Over the years, the CEP's aim of building social resilience has expanded beyond just the threat of terrorism, but also aims to enable our people to be better prepared for any crisis or emergency.



Under the CEP framework, the five cluster leads, together with the CEP Secretariat, give support to community leaders from different sectors of the society to develop response plans and initiatives for the three CEP key thrusts of building awareness and engagement of the community, enhancing capability development and achieving operational readiness.

Much has been done. We have good reason to be happy with what has been achieved so far. But we cannot slow down or stop. Nurturing communal harmony and social resilience is an ongoing process. There is no finishing line. Crises and emergencies can happen at any time without warning. In a world where uncertainties and disruptions are likely to be more frequent than in the past, we should all be prepared.

I hope that Singaporeans and residents will reflect on this, and play a part in keeping Singapore safe, secure and united.

Teo Chee Hean
*Deputy Prime Minister,
Coordinating Minister for National Security, and Minister for Home Affairs*