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WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE AT THE
OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 4TH BASIC TRAINING COURSE IN
AFTER-CARE FOR DRUG ADDICTS FOR SPECIAL CONSTABULARY
NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICERS

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Since the Special Constabulary After-care Unit was set up in May last year, 257 Part-time National Servicemen in the Special Constabulary have been trained as para-counsellors for drug addicts. And it is my pleasure this evening to welcome you to the 4th Basic Training Course.

There are 140 of you participating in this Course and like your colleagues, you have also volunteered your services because you recognise and appreciate the menace drug addiction poses. Most of you are professional men in private life and you bring with you a wealth of expertise in your respective fields. Your experience coupled with the discipline you acquired in the uniformed service are useful attributes.

The containment and eventual eradication of the drug problem is dependent to a large extent on the treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts. And we have on 1st of April this year mounted an all-out drive to this end.

As I see it there are really three steps in the treatment and rehabilitation process. First the addicts must be identified. This is primarily the responsibility of enforcement agencies. They must ensure early detection not only of the individual but all members of the peer group to which he belongs and who may also be hooked on drugs. Not one addict should escape their detection.

The second stage is treatment and rehabilitation at the Drug Rehabilitation Centres. The method of treatment used is unaided withdrawal popularly known as "Cold Turkey". This method is viewed by some sectors as a painful and inhuman form of treatment.

I'm, of course, no expert, but from my own observation when I visited the Telok Paku Drug Rehabilitation Centre, the treatment was certainly not inhuman. Treatment is supervised and conducted in small groups. I'm told that inmates in this phase of treatment, comfort and assist each other, which in my view, helps to uplift their spirits and strengthen their resolve to withstand the withdrawals.

Indeed I noticed that addicts on admission were pale and lifeless. On the other hand those who had completed the "cold turkey" treatment followed by physical exercises were robust and cheerful. Those to whom I spoke said they had regained their appetite and had put on weight. Some even wished they had been treated earlier.

Of course there have been a few who forced their way out of the Drug Rehabilitation Centre. But investigation has shown that this was due to individual weaknesses and inability to resist the craving for drugs and not because of the treatment or conditions in the Centre.

However, it is the third stage that is most crucial and most difficult of all. This is when the addict is discharged from the Drug Rehabilitation Centre and placed on compulsory after-care.

He will no longer be subjected to collective discipline and protection from the influences and pressures which had led to his dependence on drugs in the first instance. He will be free to visit his former haunts and to renew old friendships. Because bad habits die hard, the danger is that he may succumb to temptation and relapse into drug addiction.

The task ahead of you as para-counsellors in this third stage of the rehabilitation process is thus not easy. Each addict will require individual attention and perhaps a different approach if you are to win his confidence and help him to stay off drugs. Much will depend on your interest, initiative, compassion and commonsense. Guidance will, of course, be provided by Officers of the Probation and After-care Service of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

I would like to think that the position is not hopeless. A recent survey conducted from cases supervised by the Special Constabulary After-care Unit shows that 42.9 per cent have not so far relapsed into drug addiction. While it is too early at this stage to speak of success, this is nevertheless a heartening start. I know all of you will do your best to meet the challenge and we will be following your progress with great interest.

Finally, I thank you for responding to the call for volunteers and wish you success and a satisfying service in the Special Constabulary After-care Unit.