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SPEECH BY DR JOHN CHEN, MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS & INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGY

AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, MP FOR HONG KAH GRC,

AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE

BUKIT BATOK NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICE CENTRE

ON SUNDAY, 3 OCTOBER 1999 AT 10.30 A.M.

Grassroots Leaders,

Residents,

Good Morning,

I warmly welcome you to the official opening of the Bukit Batok Neighbourhood Police Centre (NPC).

2 Bukit Batok NPC is one of the six NPCs launched in Jurong Police Division in June this year. This NPC has a team of about 80 officers serving about 137,000 residents in the Hong Kah North, Bukit Batok and Bukit Gombak constituencies.

The NPC system

3 An NPC is a one-stop total policing centre. NPC officers can serve residents better as they are trained to handle the entire service process. For example, victims of crime will not be referred from one police officer to another. Residents can expect faster response, more immediate investigation, better counter service, more frequent patrols and sharper community focus. With the NPCs, the Police-community partnership will be strengthened and the safety and security of the community further enhanced.

4 The NPC system was successfully piloted in Clementi Police Division. The pilot showed that the system allowed better manpower deployment and enhanced police patrol coverage during the crime-prone hours. The enhanced police presence deterred potential criminals and improved response time to calls for assistance. Service standards also improved because the NPC is a convenient one-stop service point. In short, the system benefits residents.

5 An important aspect of the NPC system is the enhanced community-police liaison, with NPC teams taking direct ownership of the precincts under their charge. The NPC officers maintain a close liaison with the Community Development Council (CDC) and grassroots leaders in the Citizen Consultative Committees (CCCs), Resident's Committees (RCs) and Neighbourhood Committees (NCs). They work together with grassroots leaders to jointly create Community Safety and Security Programmes (CSSPs) to address the community's security concerns.

Community Safety and Security Programme

6 The Community Safety and Security Programme (CSSP) is a major initiative of the Home Team, People's Association and Community Development Councils to jointly engage and mobilise the community to share responsibility for its safety and security needs. The CSSP's proactive self-help approach allows the community to address the safety and security concerns of the neighbourhood in a more structured, focused and co-ordinated manner. Grassroots organisations, residents and the Home Team can, by working together, make the neighbourhood safer and more secure.

7 The CSSP approach is in line with one of the key principles of the

Singapore 21 vision – that of 'Active Citizenship'. To realise the Singapore 21 vision, Singaporeans are encouraged to actively contribute their ideas, time and energy to build a better Singapore. Through the CSSP, residents have the opportunity to play an active role in driving programmes and activities to improve the safety and security of their neighbourhood.

#### CSSP in the local community

8 This is my first visit to the NPC since it became part of this community three months ago. I must say that I am impressed by what I have seen. In the short span of three months, the NPC has made its presence felt in the community; not just by keeping the neighbourhoods safe and secure from crimes, but also in its efforts to reach out to the community and work hand-in-hand with the grassroots leaders to address the community's safety & security concerns.

9 I commend officers from Bukit Batok NPC and grassroots leaders for working together to create solutions through CSSPs, two of which I want to highlight today.

10 In Hong Kah North Zone 4, there were groups of youths loitering at void decks causing problems such as noise, littering and petty vandalism. After several discussions and joint meetings between the residents, grassroots leaders and NPC officers, a solution emerged in the form of a neighbourhood soccer team comprising these energetic youths. Instead of loitering at the void decks, the youths now spend their time more meaningfully. Local residents further volunteered to conduct training for the youths and local institutions also offered the use of training facilities.

11 Another example of a grassroots solution to a local problem: In Bukit Gombak Zones 1, 2 & 5, illegal parking along Hillview Avenue has been a source of concern and inconvenience to residents for some time. Enforcement action alone has not been fully effective in solving the problem. After a series of consultations between the RCs and the Police, a proposal to introduce kerb-side parking facilities was made to the Land Transport Authority. If approved, the provision of kerb-side parking will put an end to indiscriminate illegal parking, smoothen traffic flow and increase road safety. Residents will also have more parking options in their neighbourhood.

12 Bukit Batok NPC has embarked on a profiling exercise of "high-risk" students who are prone to being recruited by street corner gangs and other criminal elements. This exercise involves all five secondary schools in the Hong Kah North, Bukit Batok and Bukit Gombak Constituencies and will be completed by end October 1999. With these profiles, schools, RCs and the parents of these youths will be subsequently mobilised to work together through the CSSPs to monitor and help these youths at this vulnerable stage in their lives. This is a concrete step towards solving the problem of juvenile delinquency.

Conclusion: Co-locating the NPC with the new

Bukit Gombak Community Club

13 The present location of Bukit Batok NPC is a temporary one. The eventual NPC will be co-located with the new Bukit Gombak CC at Bukit Gombak East Ave 4 by 2001. By co-locating the NPC with the community club, the NPC will be able to operate in the heart of the community it serves in the Bukit Batok town, thereby strengthening its links with community agencies. This will in turn further strengthen the partnership between the Police and the community.

14 With the official opening of this NPC, I am confident that we will together build a closer, more cohesive and self-reliant community that is able to take on greater responsibility for our own safety and security needs. I am also confident that the residents and grassroots leaders will continue to work hand-in-hand with the Police to address the petty crimes that occur in the neighbourhood and make the community a safer and more secure place for all residents.

15 On this note, I take great pleasure in declaring the Bukit Batok Neighbourhood Police Centre officially open.

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