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Singapore Government

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SPEECH BY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR HO PENG KEE, MINISTER OF STATE FOR LAW & HOME AFFAIRS
AT THE RETAIL SECURITY 2000 CONFERENCE ON 4 OCT 99 AT 10.00AM AT THE SUNTEC CITY
CONFERENCE ROOM 203, LEVEL 2

Mr Michael Yeo, Chairman, National Crime Prevention Council

Dr Jannie Tay, President, Singapore Retailers Association

Commissioner of Police Khoo Boon Hui

Ladies and Gentlemen

I congratulate the Singapore Retailer's Association (SRA), Singapore
Police Force (SPF) and the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) for

collaborating in organising this conference.

2 A key objective of this 'Retail Security 2000' Conference is to strengthen the partnership between the retail industry and Police. The conference also presents a unique opportunity for the Police to share information with retailers on crimes affecting the retail industry. Police will also advise on measures that retailers can adopt, to prevent crime at their premises.

3 Shoplifting is a unique problem faced by the retail industry. Each year, the retail industry loses millions of dollars through such "stock shrinkage". It is in the retail trade's own interest to install proper security measures to deter and detect shoplifting.

Shoplifting cases going down

4 In 1998, the number of shoplifting cases went up by 15% as compared to 1997 - from 3,600 to 4,200 cases. The trend reversed during the first six months of this year compared to the first half of 1998 - shoplifting cases went down by 27%, from 2,100 cases to 1,500 cases. This is good news. According to the Police, one key reason is the greater security awareness and more effective measures employed by retailers now. We should press on and try to cut this down further.

5 Shoplifting is the most prevalent crime among juvenile offenders. About half the juveniles arrested by Police were caught for shoplifting. Four out of five of these young shoplifters were students. The items they stole include CDs, branded goods, and even fashionable toys like yo-yos.

6 Anti-crime and anti-shoplifting preventive education in schools help. But being a crime of opportunity, retailers' role is much more important. Retailers do their part by denying such opportunities. This you can do by installing more effective security systems and securing your products displayed.

Security Measures in Retail Outlets

7 In July this year, a SRA and Police survey of security measures used by retailers found that although many retailers have conventional physical security measures like convex mirrors and security officers, many have not used modern technology to complement these physical measures. For example, less than 20% of retailers surveyed use the Electronic Article Surveillance or EAS system to deter and detect shoplifting.

8 Contemporary retailing trends encourage retailers to adopt an open concept when displaying merchandise. However, this exposes the goods to the risk of shoplifting. The EAS system, with its sensors placed strategically at the store exit, is highly visible and very effective in deterring as well as detecting theft. The additional benefit is that this system will enable retailers to re-deploy security staff in a more efficient manner and also allow other staff to concentrate on their own activities like taking stock or serving customers, instead of keeping an eye on 'potential' shoplifters. I strongly encourage retailers to consider

installing EAS in their stores.

9 The NCPC and Police will continue to work with the SRA and retailers to further reduce shoplifting and crime in the retail industry. For example, the SRA and Police will hold regular security briefings for retail outlet security managers. These briefings will update security managers on the latest crime trends, and on the ways criminals operate, as well as learn new preventive measures. They will also be good opportunities for security managers to interact, share information, ideas and best practices.

Retail Security Charter

10 On this occasion, I am pleased to launch the Retail Security Charter. The charter is a pledge by retailers to protect their properties and premises from crime. 14 major retailers having a total of 222 retail outlets will sign the charter this morning. This is very encouraging. It will send a clear message that the retail industry is committed and united in its efforts to keep crime out.

Conclusion

11 Finally, I commend the SRA, NCPC and Police for taking a proactive approach to enhancing the level of security in the retail industry. I am confident that your partnership and commitment will generate even more positive results.

12 It is now my pleasure to declare the 'Retail Security 2000' Conference open.

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