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**SPEECH BY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR HO PENG KEE,
MINISTER OF STATE FOR HOME AFFAIRS & LAW,
AT THE OPENING OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR
ON COMMUNITY POLICING AT IMPERIAL HOTEL
ON MONDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 97 AT 10.30 AM**

I extend a warm welcome to all seminar participants.

This seminar on the 'The Koban System of Japan and its Adaptation as the NPP System in Singapore' is organised in collaboration with the Government of Japan as part of its Third Country Training Programme. This is the third seminar since 1995. Continuing a tradition established last year, this seminar will be followed by a visit to Japan for a first-hand experience of the Kobans, on which our Neighbourhood Police Post, or NPP system, was based.

The NPP system was introduced in Singapore in 1983. Today, NPPs are synonymous with community policing. Community perception of the police has changed over the years. Members of the community now see police officers as friends and protectors rather than officious law enforcers. Police officers also do not see themselves merely as law enforcers but work actively with the community to prevent crime. The police-community partnership has achieved excellent results: Crime has fallen for eight successive years since 1989. The public's perception of security in Singapore continues to be high.

Eighty-six per cent of the respondents in a public perception survey last year said they felt safer than they did five years ago.

Community policing will remain the cornerstone of our strategy. It will be fine-tuned to meet changing circumstances. The NPP system will be revamped, starting with a pilot in Clementi beginning on 1 October 1997. The Police will set up Neighbourhood Police Centres (NPCs). Each NPC will have about 100 officers as against 15 officers in a current NPP. An NPC will have between one and four NPPs under its management. While NPCs will be housed in purpose-built buildings, some may be located in new community clubs to enhance the community link. Indeed, the aim of the revamp is to strengthen the police-community relationship which is the heart of our community policing strategy.

Presently, NPP officers only handle police reports, conduct house visits but do not respond to urgent calls. Under the new system, NPP officers will also respond to urgent calls and conduct investigations into certain cases. NPP officers will also perform all necessary tasks at the scene of crime instead of waiting for officers from the Divisional HQ or the CID to arrive. Besides serving the community better, the greater autonomy will provide NPP officers with greater job satisfaction. The new system also stresses pro-active policing work like community patrols, house visits, community liaison and school visits. With improvements based on the Clementi pilot, Police will completely revamp the NPP system island-wide by the year 2000.

Following this revamp, Police is confident that public perception of their safety will remain high. Indeed, the aim is to enhance this perception, as officers will become more visible on the ground. Also, more motivated and

better- trained officers will provide faster response and more effective follow-up investigative work.

Singapore is honoured once again to organise this training seminar with Japan. I am confident that you will find the training, both here and in Japan, useful and educational. I now take great pleasure in declaring this seminar open.

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