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Subject: (Embargoed) Speech by Wong Kan Seng, 18 Feb 2000, 12.25pm

# *Singapore Government*

## ***PRESS RELEASE***

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**CLOSING ADDRESS BY MR WONG KAN SENG, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS, AT THE HOME TEAM 2000 FLAGSHIP WORKSHOP ON FRIDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2000 AT 12.25PM AT THE SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTRE AUDITORIUM**

(GPC Members)

Heads of Departments

Home Team colleagues here at Suntec and at the other 4 sector venues,

Good Morning.

### Home Team in 1999

1999 was another challenging year for the Home Team. Although regional economies began to recover, illegal immigrants continued to come to Singapore. The excellent joint enforcement actions by SIR and the Police – on land and around our waters – kept many illegal immigrants out and, at the same time, helped in arresting those who were already here. Together, Police and SIR arrested over 17,000 immigration offenders last year. The Police Coast Guard foiled 52 attempts by illegal immigrants to enter Singapore by sea.

The Home Team has also been busy on other fronts. For example, CNB conducted over 48 major drug busts last year, while SCDF's Fire Safety Bureau carried out over 3,800 fire safety checks on nightspots and workers' quarters/dormitories. Finally, the biggest Home Team effort in 1999 was the operations behind the Millennium Swing and the planning for possible Y2K contingencies. An estimated 12,900 Home Team officers were either actively involved or put on stand-by, on New Year's Eve. This not only ensured that the biggest party of the year took place safely. It also ensured that the Home Team was ready to handle any possible problems arising from the infamous Y2K bug.

The Home Team has done well last year. Each and every one of you rose to the occasion and overcame the challenges thrown your way in 1999. On top of that, Home Team officers worked with the community to achieve a 21 percent drop in the crime rate. In the recent Police's Public Perception Survey, Singaporeans now say that they feel generally safer and more secure than 3 years ago. More than 95 per cent of Singaporeans rated general security in Singapore as good, very good or excellent. This is an outcome that all of us in the Home Team can be justifiably proud of.

#### Home Team to Rise to Demands of A More Active Public

The recent survey also revealed that more members of the public would like to be involved in safety and security issues, and not merely be passive by-standers. We can expect citizens to engage the Police more, and by extension the rest of the Home Team as well. Public expectations of service standards and effectiveness will continue to rise, as the S21 vision gains greater acceptance. We welcome the prospect of more active citizen participation, and must manage and match these expectations effectively.

These are the new challenges before the Home Team. To meet them, we will have to change the way we operate. Increasingly, the Home Team will have to

involve the Private and People sectors more when we formulate or review our policies. The Home Team officers must learn how to elicit suggestions and comments from the public on how to improve our services. Our officers will also have to be more open to taking the public into our confidence by sharing information with, and explaining the policies to the public. That includes being responsive to public queries and being frank in our replies.

How successfully the Home Team can meet the challenge of rising public expectations depends critically on each and every Home Team officer. This is especially so of our officers on the ground. Ground officers are our 'front line'. From the officer manning the Neighbourhood Police Centre (NPC) to the SCDF fast response medic, from the SIR officer processing identification cards to the staff officer responding to public queries, you are the direct points of contact between the Home Team and the public. The Home Team succeeds or fails in winning over the public's trust and confidence at these primary contact points. It is thus critical that every Home Team member understands and appreciates this changing public landscape before us. I expect every commander to rally and lead their men to meet these challenges.

Commanders must also ensure that their officers understand where and when the Home Team concept can be employed, in the context of meeting new public needs. Let me explain. Each agency would have some area of work, which is inter-related with another Home Team agency. As long as officers continue to operate in their traditional, parochial ways, the service we render to the public will be disjointed and uncoordinated. Only when we operate as a Home Team, will we be able to deliver seamless, effective and efficient service to the public. It is thus essential for commanders and senior management to help their men identify what these areas for Home Team co-operation are, and also where the public is best served by operating as a single entity. This is what the Home Team concept is really about - focusing on providing the best service to the public. It calls for officers to think holistically "Home Team" and put public needs at the centre of their focus.

The Home Team concept is also about our officers becoming more aware of the larger objectives behind the jobs they do. Having a larger perspective will enable them to deal more effectively with the public. They must also be equipped

with the necessary communication skills to explain policies and decisions to the public. Being more open and transparent will not be a disadvantage, but offer the Home Team opportunities to win more public support for the often onerous tasks we have to perform.

### Home Team Achievement Award Winners

The recipients of today's Home Team Achievement Awards are Home Team officers who have effectively put the Home Team concept into practice. They best exemplify the results of Home Team synergy.

This year's awards are presented to officers who have not only made the Home Team a way of life; the officers have also broken new ground in Home Team co-operation. We are making fewer awards this year, not because the level of Home Team cooperation has slackened. On the contrary, it is because Home Team co-operation has become more common. In many areas it is already routine. The awards this year are thus a celebration of officers and projects, which have blazed new trails for others to follow. I congratulate every award recipient. You have done well.

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## Singapore as a Safe and Secure Best Home – We Play our Part

The Home Team concept continues to evolve. When we first embarked on this journey, we began with a very broad and general idea of what the Home Team concept is and should be. The emphasis was on communicating the concept to as many officers as possible. With experience, the Home Team vision is taking a more definitive shape.

But it will continue to evolve. It is a living vision. So, play your part in shaping your Home Team the way you want it to develop.

When I first launched the Home Team Vision in 1997, I challenged you ‘...to work with me to achieve our goal of being a world-class Home Team’. I renew my challenge, at the start of this new century. Join me and let us all work together to bring the Home Team to greater heights of success in our quest ‘To make Singapore a safe and secure best home for our people.’

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