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SPEECH BY MR A RAHIM ISHAK, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AT THE COMBINED GRADUATION PARADE OF  
REGULAR TRAINEE CONSTABLES AND PERSONNEL OF THE  
ELEVENTH PNS (F) INTAKE AT THE POLICE ACADEMY  
ON FRIDAY, 14 APRIL 1978 AT 5.45 P.M.

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I have been told that today's parade marks the graduation of 37 regular Police Constables, 194 Special Constables and 293 Vigilantes. The last two categories form the eleventh intake of National Servicemen into the Police Force. The large percentage of National Servicemen compared with those recruited into the regular force has been a trend for the past few years. The eleventh intake reflects this ratio. As the figures show, those admitted into the regular force form only 16-20% of the total intake. Gradually, the number of national servicemen are going to out-number the regulars. Owing to the fact that there is an acute shortage of manpower in the Police Force, this might be viewed as a healthy development. In the same way that we can speak of a citizens' army, we can now also be proud of a citizen's Police Force.

Not many countries have their own citizens' police force. In ancient Athens, the world's first and perhaps only full democracy, the citizens were themselves their own policemen. There was no professional corps as such. There are many merits in this system. Members of the citizens' police force by virtue of the fact that they are part-time law enforcers of society are closer to the people. They, unlike the police force in some Western countries, are not viewed as an opposition. They are part and parcel of the population at large and are not viewed with suspicion and fear. We can hope to avoid ugly scenes such as the recent riots involving the opening of the Narita Airport in Japan where policemen were involved in clashes with protesters. In Singapore with the recruitment of national servicemen into our

police force, there will be a slow blending of the professional policemen and the law-abiding citizen. By gradual degrees, an increasing number of policemen will be found amongst our relatives, friends and neighbours. In this way a process of osmosis takes place whereby the rule of law is better understood and respected.

Living in Singapore today demands new methods of crime prevention and a higher degree of vigilance against urbanised crime. The social environment has changed. The pace of living is faster, whether we are in or outside the office. More than one-third of our population live in high-rise housing estates. The small provision shops are slowly giving way to big air-conditioned shopping complexes. With the law environment come new forms of petty-theft, street robberies and snatch thefts. Only the other day, it was reported in the press that a 16-year old girl, in collaborating with her mother and two aunts was the focus of a gang of snatch thefts. Ten years ago, such organised crime among the fairer sex were seldom known to be possible.

The other major problem that members of our Police Force, whether the regulars or the national servicemen, could render assistance is in the field of drug prevention. I believe that counselling and after-care units have already been set up to tackle this social problem. Two months ago, I spoke of the merits of having the young help the young in drug prevention. In other words, part-time national servicemen are in the best position to understand the problems and the living habits of those in the same age group. There would therefore be no excuse for generation or communication gaps.

With the introduction of national servicemen into our Police Force, I am sure a new set of difficulties must have set in. For example, would the regular policemen accept into their ranks those who only come in to serve two or three years and then leave the force and serve perhaps only 40 days a year as a reservist? Could a sense of esprit de corps be built up? Would the regulars feel that they are superior? Then there is also the need to build up professionalism among the regulars and greater need for officers to lead and supervise the growing intake of national servicemen and corresponding number of reservists.

The fulltime national servicemen in the Police have made valuable contribution to crime prevention in the society. Besides augmenting the police presence on the ground, they have to date dealt with a total of about 5,000 cases and effected more than 8,000 arrests. I trust the officers who are graduating today will follow in the fine tradition that has been set by those who have gone before you and that you will make your own personal contributions to improve upon the fine record. You will find a challenging job ahead of you and I wish you every success in your endeavours.

In conclusion, it leaves me to compliment you on the splendid style in your turnout this evening and to congratulate the prize winners for their outstanding performance during training.

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