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SPEECH BY MR CHIN HARN TONG, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,
(HOME AFFAIRS), AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF
IN-COUNTRY DRUG ENFORCEMENT TRAINING COURSE
AT RIVERVIEW HOTEL ON MONDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 1986 AT 9.00 AM

It is my pleasure to be here this morning to preside over the Opening Ceremony of this In-Country Drug Enforcement Training Course.

The drug situation, as reported by many different sources, such as the International Narcotics Control Board and Interpol is a world problem. Drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking have become a widespread social evil. In some countries, drug abuse is so serious that it has been declared as a security threat. The growing sale of illicit drugs means an increasing drain on the financial and social resources of the affected countries. Governments are being called upon to provide more and more resources to discourage drug abuse, assist the abusers, and restrict the activities of drug traffickers. It is against this background of deteriorating drug abuse situation worldwide that the United Nations is to convene the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Vienna in June 1987. The International Conference is to deal with all aspects of drug abuse at national, regional and international levels, including production, trafficking, demand reduction and treatment and rehabilitation of addicts. It will also aim to increase universal awareness of the dangers of drug abuse and generate international co-operation to combat this problem.

In Singapore, drug abuse is viewed as a very serious problem. No efforts are spared to control the spread of drug abuse within the country. We decided to control the drug problem as soon as it became serious. Laws were tightened to deal with the drug traffickers severely. Enhanced punishment including the death penalty and preventive detention were introduced against the drug traffickers. Drug addicts are not punished but are given compulsory treatment and rehabilitation to help them become useful citizens again. Our deterrent drug laws, tough enforcement actions, compulsory treatment and rehabilitation, compulsory supervision together with after-care and preventive education have produced the desired results. The drug abuse situation is now under control. However, our close proximity to the drug producing regions makes us vulnerable to a resurgence in the drug problem and we have to be constantly vigilant.

Singapore is also committed to international co-operation to reduce the global drug problem. One way of realising this goal is to prevent Singapore from being used as a transit point for drugs destined for other countries. Several enforcement measures have been introduced to put a stop to drugs transiting through Singapore. These measures had resulted in the crippling of seven international drug trafficking syndicates this year.

Drug enforcement is one of the most important measures for tackling the drug problem. In order to carry out the drug suppression operations effectively, the training of personnel to upgrade their investigative skills and ability is essential. Furthermore, drug traffickers are always trying out new drug concealment methods and modus operandi. Drug trafficking and drug abuse trends and patterns are also constantly changing. To meet the ever changing drug scenario, our drug enforcement officers must be properly trained and have their knowledge updated.

New and more dangerous drugs such as 'crack' and the so called 'designer drugs' or 'controlled substance analogues' are becoming fashionable in some countries. The United States is one of the countries that are being affected. Our drug enforcement officers will benefit from your experience in this area.

No drug enforcement agency is better qualified to provide this training than the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) of the United States. The DEA International Training Division is the leader in the field of drug enforcement training. The training officers of DEA are highly competent and they bring to their lectures their years of experience on the field. Our drug enforcement officers will no doubt benefit much from this training course. Your coming here to train our officers will go a long way to strengthening our co-operation in the fight against the drug menace.

I would like to say to the participants that your role as drug enforcement officers is an important one as you are helping to prevent our youths from being ensnared by the evils of drug abuse. We do not want the fabric of our society eroded by drug abuse.

Singapore had previously benefited from seven similar training courses since 1972. I would like to thank the Government of the United States of America and the DEA for organising and conducting this training course for drug enforcement officers from the Central Narcotics Bureau, Police and Customs. It now gives me great pleasure to declare the Eighth In-Country Drug Enforcement Training Course open. I wish you all success in your endeavours.

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