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30 MAY 1981

SPEECH BY MR CHUA SIAN CHIN, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS,
AT THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION
CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE AT THE FRENCH ROOM, HOTEL EQUATORIAL
ON SATURDAY, 23 MAY '81 AT 11.00 AM

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Every year during Police Week in June activities have been organised to bring about better co-operation between the Police and the public. As a result, the public in Singapore has a good image of the Police Force. This was revealed in a survey conducted by the Applied Research Corporation in 1979. According to the survey report, over 90 per cent of the respondents considered the Police to be efficient and friendly and they did not think that they were interfering, frightening or bullying.

These Police Week activities are usually focussed on specific areas or topics that relate to crime prevention or road accident prevention. When they form part of a nationwide campaign they last a whole month. They seek to rouse public consciousness and mobilise the public to translate the various messages into action.

After a nationwide campaign we usually see a drop in the incidence of crime or road accidents depending upon what was being focussed in the campaign. After our nationwide "Keep Singapore Crime-Free" campaign in 1974 the crime rate began to decline. Between 1970 to 1973 the average rate was 941 seizeable offences per 100,000 of population. The rate declined to 825 cases per 100,000 population in 1975. It declined further to 787 cases per 100,000 of population in 1976. In 1976 we achieved the lowest crime rate in the decade.

However, the crime rate began to slowly climb up again. In 1979 it rose to 1,036 seizeable offences per 100,000 population and in 1980 /2.

and in 1980 to 1,226 seizable offences per 100,000 population. It rose despite the higher rate of success by the Police in arresting and prosecuting the offenders. Although the crime rate between 1979 and 1980 rose by 18 per cent, the number of persons arrested in 1980 was 24 per cent more than that in 1979. The number of persons prosecuted in court also increased by 52 per cent as compared to 1979.

We have isolated a number of factors that have contributed to this phenomenon. One of the most important is that with economic prosperity and the appearance of more and more housing estates, factories and shopping complexes, opportunities for crime have greatly increased. From a study of the offences committed, we notice that most of them are crimes of opportunity. For example, most of the housebreakings and thefts occurred when the premises were not attended to.

The number of housebreakings accompanied by thefts has been rising for the past two years. In 1979 there were 2,427 and in 1980, 2,588 such cases. By studying the modus operandi of the housebreaking cases we found that most of them could have been prevented if proper physical security measures have been taken to make the premises more secure. To illustrate this, I now give the breakdown of the modus operandi of the break-ins that occurred for the year 1980. They are as follows:-

| | | |
|--------------------------------|----|-----|
| Forcing open doors | -- | 806 |
| Removing window louvers/panes | -- | 292 |
| Forcing open windows | -- | 169 |
| Climbing through open windows | -- | 68 |
| Removing/forcing open padlocks | -- | 208 |
| Smashing glass panels | -- | 104 |
| Forcing open collapsible gates | -- | 181 |

There was also a rise in robberies. There were 1,076 cases in 1979 and 1,267 in 1980. Most of them occurred in the streets and public places. A high proportion of them took place in lonely and poorly lit areas. They could have been prevented if the victims had avoided such places. On the other hand, robberies involving the use of firearms have declined. There were only 17 such cases in 1980 compared to 31 cases in

1979. Besides /3.

1979. Besides the severe penalties provided by the law for such offences, the better security measures taken by jewellery shops and banks must have contributed to its decline.

Thefts of motor vehicles have also increased. The number of motor-cars stolen rose from 464 in 1979 to 483 in 1980. Theft of motor-cycles showed a sharper rise from 1,048 in 1979 to 1,357 in 1980. Here again, most of the thefts were due to the carelessness of the owners, who left their vehicles without locking them properly.

Although the crime rate in Singapore has risen, there has been a drop in crime in our HDB estates in the last two years. Serious crime like robberies and housebreakings showed an appreciable decrease in HDB estates. Robberies in HDB estates accounted for 46 per cent of the total robberies in 1979. This percentage dropped to 35 per cent in 1980. Housebreakings accounted for 28 per cent of all housebreakings in 1979. The percentage dropped to 24 per cent in 1980. This drop has been achieved despite the fact that there were more HDB housing units in 1980 than in 1979.

The drop in the crime rate in HDB estates can be attributed to a significant extent to the formation of Residents' Committees (RCs) which started in 1978. Most of the HDB estates now have active RCs operating within their respective zones. They have brought about greater neighbourliness, broken down the impersonal attitude and built up greater cohesion among the residents. Many of the RCs are now very conscious of the security of their zone and know the benefits of group effort to prevent crime. There is now very close liaison between the RCs and the police officers in the various police divisions who are actively advising them on crime prevention measures.

This development is most encouraging. It underlines the tremendous importance of close co-operation between the Police and the community in preventing and deterring crime. If we can rouse the vast majority of the public to observe the simple crime prevention rules, they can help the Police to

bring down the /4.

bring down the crime rate. Thus the theme chosen for this year's campaign is "You Can Help Prevent Crime".

We do not however expect members of the public to do the work that should be done by the police. What is required is for all to learn to protect themselves and their property by taking very simple precautions. Quite often, people are unwitting aids to criminals. They are careless when they should not be. The best defence against crime is prevention.

I am particularly pleased to note the ready support given by all of you here today, in coming forward to serve on the National Crime Prevention Campaign Committee. Your participation and support will contribute immeasurably to the success of the campaign.

Each sector of society or department which you represent can play a very important role in the campaign. The Residents' Committees must continue to mobilise the HDB residents to be active in crime prevention work. The Architects Association should work towards the adoption of building codes which will contribute towards better overall physical security of premises. Associations representing the merchants, the manufacturers, the banks, the hotels and the workers can help by spreading the message and practice of crime-prevention to all their members.

I wish to thank all of you again for your support.

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