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SPEECH BY MR CHUA SIAN CHIN, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS, AT THE
OFFICIAL OPENING OF CHANGI AIRPORT POLICE STATION ON THURSDAY,
3 JUNE 1982 AT 9.00 AM

The Singapore Police Force is now in the process of being revamped and modernised to meet our changing demography and environment in the 80s, 90s and beyond. To help us work out a new policing system and its manpower requirements as well as to plan the necessary infrastructure facilities, we had teams of police experts from Japan and the UK to study and make recommendations.

We have now received both their reports. They are being processed and a decision will be made soon as to what portions of their reports and recommendations are acceptable and will be implemented. However, what I can say now is that both the studies have been very thorough. Never before had such comprehensive professional studies been made on our policing system and organisation.

Although each of the teams was asked to study specifically different aspects of police organisations and operations, both had recommended a fundamental shift in policing methods from one of reacting to incidents to that of going all out to nurture police-community relationship as a means of fighting and preventing crime. What is new in this is that it should be part and parcel of our policing system. It must be built into the day to day interactions between police officers and members of the public and supplemented by periodic crime prevention campaigns and open houses organised by the police.

To the Japanese, police-public co-operation means that the police must acquire it by going out to contact local residents, listen to their problems and attend to their requests. Only in this way will close

rapport with the police be built up. The residents will then come forward to report the presence of criminals or suspicious looking strangers in their neighbourhood. Whereupon the policemen will be able to act swiftly to prevent a crime from taking place. This task is undertaken by their Patrol Police which operates from a network of police posts or kobans situated throughout the country. Thus the duties of the police patrols are not merely law enforcement. What is especially important is for them to render whatever service they can to the local residents. This in essence is what the koban system of policing is all about.

The Japanese team after studying our local situation has recommended that a modified koban system be implemented in Singapore. They have recommended that at least one police post should be established in every constituency and more than one in the larger constituencies making a total of 91 police posts for the whole of Singapore. They have recommended that the koban system should first be implemented as a pilot project in one of our police divisions. This is a necessary phase to evaluate its performance and operational effectiveness. They have also found that compared to Tokyo our police land divisions are far too large for the proper supervision of the police posts. They have recommended that the number of our police divisions be increased.

The British team of experts who went into detailed studies of the demarcation of our police land divisions came to the same conclusion that our present police divisions have to undertake too heavy a workload. Our police divisions were created over 30 years ago. Since then besides the growth of our population the number of tourists coming to Singapore annually has surpassed our total population. We have also a huge number of foreign workers under work permit. After a study of future shifts of population and land use over the next 20 years they have recommended a new demarcation of our police land divisions to serve us into the 1990s and beyond.

They have recommended that our present eight land divisions be increased to 10 by 1985. They should then be increased to 13 divisions by 1991 and to 15 after 1991. This means that some of the old police headquarters stations must be replaced by the building of new ones and

be relocated in accordance with the new divisional boundaries. An additional two new headquarters stations are also required to be built by 1985.

The British team has recommended that the new police divisional boundaries should not cut across constituency boundaries as they do now. At present some of our constituencies come within two or even three police land divisions. This is most unsatisfactory in building up close rapport between the "OCs" of divisions and their officers and the CCCs, CCMCs and RCs. It also leads to duplication of work. This re-demarcation and increase of police divisions will greatly benefit the public. The deployment of policemen and the despatch of resources to answer emergency calls would be rendered more quickly and efficiently.

Both the Japanese and British teams also made detailed studies of the manpower requirements in terms of numbers, quality and the necessary training. For the implementation of the koban system the Japanese team has not only recommended an increase in the number of officers for patrol deployment to meet the increased duties and workload but also recruitment of better calibre officers. Officers should not only possess better educational qualification but also an aptitude to establish good human relationship with the local residents. They must be able to inspire confidence and command respect. This is crucial to the success of the koban system. Since in practice it is not possible to man all the kobans with officers who are both experienced in dealing with the public and possess higher academic qualification, the Japanese have solved the problem by deploying in a koban a combination of old and young officers. The older officers usually have the experience but have lesser academic qualification and the new and young officers better educational qualification but less experience. This creates a kind of symbiotic relationship between the younger and older officer in the koban and makes them work as a team. We should follow this example when we implement our new policing system.

The Japanese authorities have indicated that they will help us in the practical training of our officers to operate the koban system, particularly training in the specialised techniques of doing liaison work among the local residents.

The British team also made recommendations not only for increase in the manpower to meet the increased workload and commitment but also to save manpower wherever possible through rationalisation of functions and better utilisation through better training and better technical support and equipment. The British team also made very detailed recommendations on training and curriculum development to raise the standards of instruction in our Police Academy.

The British team further made a detailed study of the various branches of the Singapore Police Force including the Traffic Division, Radio Division, Marine Police, the Police Task Force (PTF) and the Airport Police and recommended measures for improvement. For the Airport Police they have recommended that it should be a fully independent division to cater for the special demands of a large ultra-modern and fast growing airport such as our Changi Airport. They have also recommended that the Airport Division should have its own strike force to be formed from men specially selected from the present strength of the Airport Police but trained to the same standards as that received by the PTF men.

Our Airport Police has come a long way since our Singapore Police Force took over the airport policing at Paya Lebar Airport 12 years ago. In 1970 international terrorism such as hijacking and sabotage of aircraft was unknown in this part of the world. Today such occurrences in airports are common. Thus the responsibility of our Airport Police in providing tight security coverage for our large and busy Changi Airport has tremendously increased.

With all these fundamental changes and developments in our policing system and organisation in the offing, our Singapore Police Force faces very challenging times in the next few years. With entry of better calibre recruits, better training and better equipment and facilities we can build up a fine modern Police Force. However, the greatest challenge is still how to bring out from every member of the Force a deep sense of commitment to serve. Without such commitment, however good a policing system and organisation we have devised, we would still not have attained our objective of building up a Police Force that the people of Singapore can look to with pride and confidence in 1980s and 1990s.

The Airport Police has now its own modern two-storey building to operate from. It is a far cry from its previous dilapidated pre-World War II compound house at Paya Lebar. It has ample space to cater for service to the public as well as better facilities and amenities to work in. I would like here to remind all officers of the Airport Police not to forget that they are in daily contact with large numbers of visitors to Singapore. It is therefore important that they must consciously uphold the reputation of the Singapore Police Force which is internationally known for its honesty, efficiency and good service. It now gives me great pleasure to officially declare open the Changi Airport Police Station.
