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Singapore

19 MAR 1983

11-1/83/02/26

Acc No NARC

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SPEECH BY MR CHUA SIAN CHIN, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS, AT THE BRIEFING OF CCC/MC/RC LEADERS ON NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING SYSTEM AT KIM KEAT COMMUNITY CENTRE ON SATURDAY 26 FEBRUARY 1983 AT 3.00 PM

Introduction

We will be ready to start the Neighbourhood Police Post or in short NPP System as from June 1983 onwards. It will be implemented in stages, beginning with the Toa Payoh Police Division. It will bring about a fundamental change in the doctrine and method of policing in Singapore. It is therefore necessary to explain to the public the need for this change, its concept and operation and how community leaders and residents can give their support and derive benefit from it.

I shall deal with it in general, concentrate on the social and political aspects and explain why without this radical change in our policing system we will not, in the long term, be able to forge the kind of close relationship between the police and the public that is necessary to prevent our crime rate from rising and keep it down permanently. The Commissioner of Police and his two senior officers will deal with the professional aspects of the system and brief you on the details.

Rapid Changes In Singapore

In the last 20 years, as a result of urban renewal and our public housing programme, there have been major shifts of population. This has rendered the location and areas of jurisdiction of most of our police stations out of date. Today more than 70 per cent of our population are living in highrise HDB estates. The old methods of police patrolling have to be modified to meet the changed social environment. With higher literacy and better education the needs and expectations of our population have become sophisticated. They are now more aware of their rights and

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responsibilities. Singapore has become highly urbanised and like other industrialised countries of the world, is also faced with the problem of a rising crime rate.

Need For Radical Change Of Doctrine and System Of Policing

To meet these changes, not only must our Police Divisional Boundaries be re-demarcated, new Police HQ stations built and old ones re-located, there must also be a radical change in the doctrine and system of policing. In the past we have had Police Weeks, Open Houses at our police stations and the Police Academy, Crime Prevention campaigns, all aimed at fostering good relationship and co-operation between the police and the public.

In the last two years this close police/public relationship and co-operation has been strengthened further with the introduction of the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, the establishment of the National Crime Prevention Council and the formation of Boys' Clubs. Although these developments had their effects in forging closer relationship and co-operation between the police and the residents, particularly community leaders in HDB neighbourhoods, the majority of HDB residents and the general public and police officers in their Police Divisions are still strangers to one another. This is because at present there is no comprehensive avenue by which the vast majority of the residents can interact with the police officers and get to know one another well.

Concept And Operation of NPP System

The new NPP System that we are going to implement will ensure that police officers will always be close to all the residents and continuously interact with them. To achieve this, the Police Posts will be located in the neighbourhood where the residents can conveniently have access to and the core of police officers who man the Posts can be deployed to interact closely with the residents. An important feature of the NPP System is the home visits by NPP officers every six-monthly to get to know the residents, listen to their views and suggestions and offer their services. Only after the cultivation of such personal relationship of that of a friend who would help them in case of need that the residents would have confidence and trust in the police officers.

Only with the establishment of such trust in the police officers can we expect the vast majority of the residents to come forward to freely voice complaints, confide in the police officers and volunteer information of the presence of criminals and strangers behaving suspiciously in the neighbourhood. The police officers will then be able to take swift and effective action and make the neighbourhood a safer place to live in. It is this type of police presence that is interwoven and integrated with the community rather than the mere visible presence of police patrols that is the crucial factor in making a neighbourhood safe. This in essence is the concept of our community orientated NPP System.

Better Calibre And Trained Police Officers For Neighbourhood Police Posts

To cultivate the trust and gain the respect of the residents the police officers deployed in the Police Posts must be of a better calibre and have an aptitude to establish good human relationship with the people. This is absolutely vital in ensuring the success of the NPP System. The police officers who will be deployed to man the Police Posts in the Toa Payoh Division in June this year have already been selected and are undergoing practical training particularly in the specialised technique of how to liaise and work with the local residents. Two Japanese police officers are helping us in the training. The NPP System will also mean increased duties and workload of the Police officers deployed to the Police Posts. To cater for this a total increase of 4,000 officers for the Police Force has been provided for. We have now embarked upon the recruitment of at least 800 officers per year.

Modelled After The Japanese Koban System

We have modelled our NPP System after the Japanese Koban System. We have done so after studying the policing systems of a number of countries. We found that all the affluent, industrialised countries of the world with the exception of Japan experience a rising crime rate. The Japanese have been successful in keeping their crime rate down because of their community orientated koban system of policing. Excellent police/public co-operation based on complete confidence and trust exists in every neighbourhood in Japan. The residents do not hesitate to volunteer information of the presence of criminals and to come forward to be witnesses

to crimes committed. As a result the koban police were responsible for more than 60 per cent of the clearance rate of criminal cases in Japan.

Help Of Two Study Teams

In devising our NPP System we had the help of two study teams, one Japanese and the other British. The Japanese team found that it was feasible to introduce the Koban style policing system in Singapore provided it was suitably modified to fit in with our ethnic diversity and social infrastructure. The British team concurred with it. Further, we have an added advantage to ensure the success of our NPP System in that we have already built up a strong infrastructure of grass-root organisations such as the Residents' Committees (RCs), CCCs, Neighbourhood Watch Groups, and Boys' Clubs. They are already interacting closely with our police officers from our Police Divisions. Another advantage which is not present in Japan is that our NPP boundaries will coincide with our electoral constituencies.

Role Of Our Grass-root Organisations And Their Leaders and Advisers

From the very beginning we shall need the support and participation of the grass-root organisations and their leaders and Members of Parliament who are their advisers to ensure the successful implementation of our NPP System. First we will want their help in informing and explaining to the residents what the new policing system is about, how it will operate, what support they can give and the benefits that can be derived from it. They can also help in providing us with useful feedback on the reactions of the residents and to smoothen the implementation of the NPP System. We shall be embarking on a campaign to publicise and inform the public about this new Policing System. This is to ensure the smooth implementation of the NPP System in the Toa Payoh Police Division in June this year.

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