

Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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SPEECH BY MR CHUA SIAN CHIN, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS
AT THE NCPC MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATE PRESENTATION DINNER
AT THE SUELL SPORTS CLUB ON 12 MARCH '83 AT 7.30 PM

The crime rate in Singapore has been steadily increasing from 1976 to 1981. In 1981 it reached 1,611 cases per 100,000 of population. This is consistent with the rising crime trend experienced in other highly urbanised and developed countries with the exception of Japan. However, our general level of crime is still very much below that of many of the developed countries. Our streets are relatively safe to walk during the day or night. Our residential neighbourhoods are also reasonably safe and peaceful.

Last year, however, our crime rate went down for the first time. It was reduced from 1,611 cases per 100,000 of population in 1981 to 1,600. This was brought about by a significant drop of two main categories of crime, that is, robberies and housebreakings which declined by eight per cent and 9.8 per cent respectively. This came about as a result of less criminal offences being committed in public housing estates in 1982 compared to 1981. The robberies decreased by 22.3 per cent and housebreakings by 31.3 per cent. This was achieved not without much effort on the part of the Police and the public. It was in the public housing estates that with the encouragement of the Police, the Residents' Committees (RCs) got together the residents to form Neighbourhood Watch Groups to protect each other's homes and families and prevent criminal elements from intruding into their neighbourhoods.

The Neighbourhood Watch Scheme was started in June 1981. To date all 69 constituencies with RCs have launched the scheme within their constituencies. Out of a total of 244 RC zones, 218 have Neighbourhood Watch Groups in operation. Altogether 7,102 Watch Groups have been formed covering 358,122 public housing units. A plan is now being worked out to expand the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme to bring in the remaining RC zones and residential blocks in our public housing estates not yet covered by the scheme. We can therefore envisage that before long all our public housing estates where more than 70 per cent of our population live, will be covered by the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. We can therefore expect the incidence of robberies, housebreakings and other crimes in our public housing estates to go down further.

While incidence of crime in public housing estates is on the down trend, criminal offences committed in commercial buildings are on the rise. In 1982, robberies in commercial buildings increased by 15.2 per cent and housebreakings by 41 per cent as compared to the figures in 1981. This trend of rising crime in commercial buildings such as shopping complexes, office blocks and factories can be expected to continue unless a concerted effort is made to stop it. This is because as our residential areas are made safer through the expansion of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme and later by the implementation of our Neighbourhood Police Post (NPP) system which will cover our public housing estates first, our criminals will inevitably transfer their operations to commercial complexes and office buildings. These commercial premises where most of the tenants and occupants and visitors are unknown to one another or have very impersonal relationships, provide ideal conditions for criminals to move around undetected, commit crime and get away with it.

The Crime Prevention Department has started a survey of commercial premises and to date identified the first 122 complexes which are vulnerable to crime. The management, owners and the tenants of these premises are being contacted by our crime prevention officers and given advice on what measures to take to strengthen their security. However, for such measures to be really effective, it is much more than just implementing physical security measures such as installing an alarm or close circuit TV system. What is crucial is the building up of security consciousness and the relationship of mutual help and close co-operation among the owners and occupants of the premises. Thus our plan to prevent crime in commercial premises is first to get together the management, owners, tenants as well as employees to form crime prevention committees which will be in charge of organising crime prevention activities and measures. The crime prevention committees will in fact be the counterpart of the ECs in public housing estates.

It is in the formation of these crime prevention committees in our shopping complexes, office blocks, factories and other commercial establishments that our National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) is in an ideal position to play an effective role. The relevant public bodies and associations such as that of manufacturers, retail merchants, banks, insurance companies, hotels, architects and the NTUC are all represented in the Council. Most of the heads of these bodies are on the Board of Directors of the Council. The NCPC can therefore as a start persuade its members and later mobilise the rest of the commercial and industrial sector to take crime prevention seriously and to organise crime prevention committees in every shopping centre, business premises and factory.

In fact soon after its establishment the NCPC formed working committees to study and identify crime problems in specific areas such as commercial premises, industrial premises, public housing and residential premises. These committees have produced good reports identifying crime risks and security weaknesses in these areas. The recommendations contained in them are now being disseminated to the various bodies and associations for information and implementation.

The Council has now formulated a new strategy to bring the crime prevention message to the public. As part of its year round action plan, the Council intends to form security liaison committees with some trade associations representing high risk premises such as the banks, finance companies and jewellers. Two such committees - one with the Singapore Hotels Association and the other with the Singapore Retail Merchants Association are already in existence. The plan also includes series of security workshops for various business such as hotels, department stores, shopping centres and factories. There will also be a public seminar on crime prevention aimed at spreading the crime prevention message.

The NCPC has indeed a challenging task ahead of it. To motivate and mobilise the commercial sector to take their crime prevention responsibilities seriously will require a great deal of effort and persistence even though the advantages to the owners and tenants of the premises for doing so are obvious and concrete. It is, however, not difficult to convince the owners and tenants of the need to keep their premises free of crime for no customer or client

would like to go to places where they can be assaulted and robbed. But what is difficult is to get people together and organise them so that they will co-operate with each other for mutual protection.

The NCPC therefore needs all the support they can get from firms and organisations to attain their aims and objectives. This must also include financial support. In this respect they have been very successful in raising a total sum of \$731,100/- from generous donations made by 25 firms and organisations who have come forward to join the NCPC as members. I am sure this will go a long way in financing the Council's activities. I have much pleasure to present membership certificates to the representatives of these firms and organisations in recognition of their appointment as members of the NCPC. It is also my pleasure to present seven certificates of appreciation to individuals and firms for their services and contributions to the NCPC. May I take this opportunity to commend them for their publicspiritedness.

While the Council will continue to keep up their good work, I urge more firms and organisations to come forward to support the Council by becoming members.

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