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**SPEECH BY MR CHUA SIAN CHIN, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS,
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICE POST
AT BLOCK 89, LORONG 2, TAO PAYOH ON 3 JUNE '83 AT 10.00 AM**

Today is Police Day. It has been chosen as an auspicious day to launch the implementation of the Neighbourhood Police Post (NPP) System in Singapore with the opening of the first Neighbourhood Police Post here in the Khe Bong constituency. It is an event of great significance in the history of the Singapore Police Force. June 3rd, '83 will be remembered as the day when a fundamental change in the doctrine and method of policing was introduced in Singapore.

Besides the Khe Bong Police Post, seven other NPPs in the Toa, Payoh Police Division will also be opened as from June '83. This forms the first phase in the implementation of the NPP System. During the course of one year its implementation will be closely monitored, and the organisational and operational problems evaluated. If it is necessary, modifications will be made before the scheme is extended to other Police Divisions.

We plan to implement the NPP System in two other Police Divisions, Ang Mo Kio and Jurong next year. The boundaries in these two Police Divisions will be re-demarcated to coincide with the constituency boundaries by 1984. A total of 10 NPPs will be built in HDB estates in these two Police Divisions. We plan to cover the other Police Divisions by building about 10 NPPs each year within the next five years. Altogether there will be a network of some 91 NPPs throughout Singapore. The 91 NPPs include Posts that will be built in HDB new towns which are being developed up to 1992.

The speed and direction of implementation of the NPP System is determined by a number of factors and constraints. First is the police manpower constraint. Each NPP requires an average of 30 officers and we will have to recruit an additional 4,000 officers. With an overall attrition rate of three to five per cent, even if we could recruit 700 to 800 officers annually we can just manage to establish about 10 posts each year. However, with improvement in the salary scale, we have been able to recruit to date this year over 400 officers.

Before the NPP System is implemented, the Police Divisional boundaries have to be re-demarcated and new Police Divisions created. This in turn will depend upon the schedule of construction of new Police Headquarter stations to re-locate old stations and to serve new centres of population. It will also depend upon the pace of development of the HDB new towns. Certain constituencies with a new town under construction will not have NPPs until the new town is fully developed.

As more than 70 per cent of our population now reside in our highrise public housing estates, we have decided that we should give priority to establishing NPPs in constituencies with large public housing estates. Further, the old method of policing is completely out of place and ineffective in highrise buildings, particularly in highrise residential estates. Hitherto we tried out vertical policing. But it was not a success. This is because there was hardly any interaction between the residents and the police officers on patrol. It was also physically impossible for the daily police patrols to cover sufficient number of highrise blocks to make their physical presence felt in order to be effective.

It was the problem of policing highrise apartments and buildings as well as the changed social environment of Singapore that made us decide that a fundamental change of

the philosophy and system of policing was absolutely necessary. With a better educated population we can expect the public to be assertive of their rights and more demanding of the services of the Police. At the same time they will be more aware of their responsibilities as citizens and play their part in co-operation with the Police to make their neighbourhoods safe.

I must, however, point out that this significant step towards a community orientated policing philosophy and system was not taken all of a sudden. In fact, the ground had been carefully prepared towards forging closer relationship and co-operation between the Police and the public, particularly the grassroot organisations in our HDB neighbourhoods in the last two years. This was done through the formation of the National Crime Prevention Council, the Neighbourhood Watch Group (NWG) and the Boys' Clubs. Police officers were encouraged to join Residents' Committees and spearhead the formation of NWGs.

We have devised our NPP system after the Japanese Koban system by adapting it to suit our local environment and requirements. We have chosen the Japanese model because Japan was about the only industrialised country which was successful in keeping its crime rate from rising. They were able to achieve this because of the excellent police and community relationship and co-operation established by the Koban system based on complete confidence and trust. As a result the Japanese residents do not hesitate to volunteer information and come forward as witnesses to crimes committed in their neighbourhood. It is this crucial factor rather than anything else including cultural traits, that made more than 90 per cent of the criminals arrested by the Koban police to confess their crime and accept punishment.

The key to the success of our NPP System is the establishment of complete rapport, confidence and trust between the NPP officers and the residents in the neighbourhood. However, before this can be achieved there must be close and meaningful interaction between the NPP officers and the residents. The NPP officers must first get to know every resident by visiting them in their homes as it is done under the Koban system. Every household will be visited at least twice annually. Only in this way can every resident come to know their NPP officers as friends. By talking and listening to the residents, the police officers will have a better appreciation of the problems of the neighbourhood. Residents on their part will know how and where to summon the police for help when they need it.

The NPP officers will be undertaking a much wider role than what a police officer had done before. Those who are being deployed have therefore been specially selected and given specialised training at the Police Academy to equip them for the job. I am confident that they will be able to rise to the challenge and do a good job.

I must also stress that the public has an equally vital role to play for the success of the NPP System. The Police alone cannot fight crime effectively. They require help and co-operation of the public. If residents who witness a crime being committed do not volunteer information, police investigations will be greatly hampered. Crime thrives only when ignorance, indifference and unconcern prevail. However, in the last two to three years, as the result of the active involvement of our grassroot organisations in crime prevention activities and in particular the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, we have now built up sufficient public spiritedness in our HDB neighbourhoods to ensure the success of the NPP System.

We shall, however, need the active support of the leaders of our grassroot organisations to explain 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 provide useful feedback on the reactions of the residents.

I am confident that with the support of the CCCs, MCs and RCs, together with the residents, the NPP System will succeed.

It now gives me great pleasure to officially declare open the Khe Bong Neighbourhood Police Post.

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