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SPEECH BY MR CHUA SIAN CHIN, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS,
AT THE NATIONAL DAY DINNER OF MACPHERSON CONSTITUENCY,
AT THE MACPHERSON COMMUNITY CENTRE
ON SUNDAY, 28 AUGUST 1983 AT 7.30 PM

We Singaporeans can celebrate our 18th year of independence with a great deal of satisfaction and sense of achievement. Despite the world recession, our rate of economic growth has been much higher than many other countries of the world. Our Singapore dollar is strong and foreign investment has continued to flow in. This is because our government has been able to maintain political stability and ensure the security of the country.

We have now a better educated people. In more recent years we have also devoted a great deal of effort on social and cultural development which is vital to nation-building. In particular we have begun to instil in our people, especially our young people, the virtues of self-reliance, cooperation and team work. These are necessary pre-requisites if we want to increase productivity or to ensure security and improve our living environment. Our people must learn to work together as a team not only in a factory but also in a neighbourhood. There must also be close working together between the governmental authority and the people.

In the last five years the government has launched a number of national campaigns and schemes to generate this spirit of cooperation and self-help. We have made some significant progress. To ensure its success we have built up the infrastructure by the establishment of Residents'

Committees (RCs). This is to facilitate involvement at the grassroots throughout the neighbourhoods of our public housing estates. With the cooperation of the RCs the police were able to launch the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme (NWS) in June 1981. The target of getting the NWS launched in all the 244 RC zones set up in the 69 constituencies has now been achieved. To date 8,922 Watch Groups have been formed in the 244 RC zones. The next stage is to expand the scheme to cover the rest of the housing units within each RC zone.

The effect of the NWS has been quite positive. Although more than 70 per cent of our population live in public housing estates which also include some industrial zones and commercial areas, in 1982 only 42 per cent of all robberies and 28 per cent housebreakings in Singapore were committed in public housing estates when compared with other areas. Both these offences also showed a downward trend in public housing estates.

On the other hand, the crime rates in commercial buildings shows an upward trend. For example, in 1982 robberies in commercial premises increased by 15.2 per cent and housebreakings by 41 per cent compared with the corresponding figures in 1981. With the expansion of our NWS in our public housing estates it is to be expected that the criminals would transfer their operations to our commercial complexes. The police together with the National Crime Prevention Council have launched a plan to get the commercial sector to form crime prevention committees among the owners and tenants, management and employees occupying the premises. The Crime Prevention Department had started a survey and identified 160 shopping/commercial complexes which are vulnerable to crime. To date crime prevention committees have been set up in 18 major shopping complexes.

The fight against crime is a relentless one. Half measures will not succeed. Thus the NWS must also be extended to cover some 48,000 private residential houses comprising bungalows, semi-detached and terrace houses, private highrise apartments and condominiums. More housebreakings and robberies occur in these private housing estates than in public housing estates though they house a much smaller population. They are also on the rise. The five per cent robberies and 30 per cent housebreaking cases occurring in these premises in 1982 have risen to 10 per cent and 34 per cent respectively from January to July this year.

These private residential houses can be grouped into 238 private estates. In addition, there are 18,122 private apartments located in 178 locations. Of these, 46 housing estates and apartment blocks have Residents' Associations which are the counterpart of the RCs. The police have been in contact with the associations to encourage them to launch the NWS. To date 11 associations have responded and have organised a total of 122 NW Groups. It is just not sufficient to install security alarms in the house though they are necessary. To really ensure the security of a neighbourhood, the neighbours must get together and keep an eye on each other's homes and be on the look-out for strangers who behave suspiciously. The answer is for the private estates which have no Residents' Associations to form them and to organise NW Groups.

From our own experience and that of other countries, it is clear that there is only one way by which we can keep crime rate down. Police efforts must be matched by public response and cooperation. To deter and keep crime down in every neighbourhood the residents and the police officers

must work as a team. Recently there has been a number of serious crimes of robberies and housebreakings involving murder and rape. However, as a result of the quick response and cooperation of members of the public the police have been able to make some swift arrests. To foster such police/public cooperation we must continue to build up a relationship of trust and confidence between the public and police. This is the very foundations of our new community oriented policing system which is our Neighbourhood Police Post or NPP system. It is this close police/public relationship that was built up under the Koban system that is responsible for keeping crime rate down in Japan. It is the Koban police who is responsible for more than 60 per cent of the criminal cases solved in Japan. Because they have complete trust and confidence in their Koban police the Japanese public do not hesitate to come forward with information or as witnesses to crimes committed. As a result of this, more than 90 per cent of the criminals arrested by the Koban police confess to their crime.

I am confident that as our NWS expands beyond our public housing estates and our NPP system is introduced in more police divisions, we shall be able to build up the kind of police/public relationship based on mutual trust and confidence. We shall be able to not only arrest our present rising crime rate but also keep it down permanently.

I would like now to refer to the BEST Education classes that had been held in the PAP MacPherson branch. We are one of the few constituencies who volunteered to join the pilot scheme to start BEST classes in January this year. I am glad we did so not only because there was a good response in the enrolment but our students achieved excellent results in the June examinations. We had more than 90 per cent success rate. I am glad to note that the

enrolment for the July intake has now increased. I would like to congratulate the students and commend the teachers and organisers for their good work.

I hope when we celebrate our National Day next year we shall have made further progress in all fields. I wish you all the best in the year ahead.
