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**SPEECH BY MR CHUA SIAN CHIN, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS,
AT THE OPENING OF THE FIRST ASIAN PACIFIC CONGRESS ON LEGAL
MEDICINE AND FORENSIC SCIENCES AT THE MANDARIN HOTEL
ON SUNDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 1983 AT 6 PM**

The holding of this First Asian Pacific Congress on Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences in Singapore marks a significant milestone in the achievement of the Medico-Legal Society of Singapore. Since its formation in January 1974 the Society has done much to fulfil its objective of bringing about closer co-operation between the medical and legal professions and all other professionals involved with law enforcement and the administration of justice.

I remember well the inaugural meeting of the Society for I had the pleasure and the privilege to be invited to inaugurate it as the then Minister for Health. It was a gathering of professionals with diverse disciplines and skills. But all had a common goal which was to pursue the truth and advance the cause of justice.

This Congress which is the first to be held in the Asian Pacific region will result in the formation of an Asian Pacific Association of Forensic Sciences. This will bring about closer co-operation and interchange of ideas and expertise among the medico-legal bodies and practitioners of the forensic sciences in the region. The Asian Pacific region is fast becoming an area of growing importance in the world. Thus close co-operation not only among the governmental authorities but also among

professional and other bodies can work towards the enrichment as well as ensuring peace and security of the region.

To the big crime syndicates, national boundaries are no barrier to their international operations. In the Asian Pacific region we have the Golden Triangle which is one of the world's major sources of narcotic drugs. Thus we face the problem of international drug trafficking. But with the co-operation of other law enforcement agencies in the region, the Central Narcotics Bureau of Singapore was able to contribute significantly to the breaking up of a number of international drug trafficking syndicates with the arrests and bringing to justice the leaders. Their operations which also involved murders extend from Australia and New Zealand to Europe. More recently the Singapore Police was successful in breaking up an international fraud syndicate involved in the passing off of forged US Treasury Bills to banks amounting to millions of dollars by the arrest of a number of suspects.

We are now living in a world of increasing violence. Internationally we have a number of terrorist groups moving around the world committing acts of terrorism causing death and injury to advance some political cause or other. The victims are usually innocent people. The increasing violence is also the result of modern weaponry which is becoming more destructive. The multi-disciplinary expertise and experience of our practitioners of forensic sciences have thus become more and more in demand to help in establishing the evidence and bring the perpetrators to book.

I am sure the skills and expertise of our forensic scientists will play an important role in helping to provide the answers to the unanswered questions relating to the recent barbaric act of the shooting down of the unarmed civilian South Korean airliner. As more pieces of wreckage and bodies of victims from the airliner are recovered, it should be possible with the help of forensic expertise to expose the truth to the world and clear any remaining doubts as to who were responsible for this crime against humanity.

Within national boundaries the increase in violence the world over is reflected in the rising crime rate in both developing as well as developed countries. Here again the highly specialised knowledge and experience of the forensic science practitioners are becoming indispensable in the investigation and the solving of crime. The crime rate in Singapore has also been rising in the last five years. However, the crime rate in Singapore is low compared to major cities of the world. The crime rate in Singapore per 100,000 of population for 1981 is 1609.0 as compared to 2268.5 in Tokyo, and 9033.0 in New York. In respect of serious crime such as murder, robbery and housebreaking, the figures in 1981 per 100,000 of population for Singapore are 2.0, 57.0 and 107.6 respectively as compared to 1.6, 4.4 and 368.9 for Tokyo and 12.3, 684.0 and 1991.7 for New York respectively.

However, the increase in the number of cases of murder in the first eight months (January to August) this year from 28 cases for the same period last year to 37 cases, has caused some concern to the people of Singapore. It is therefore necessary for me to put the matter in its proper perspective by analysing the various categories of murder that have occurred and to indicate whether they could have been prevented by Police action.

Murder cases are broadly classified into two categories, preventable murders or non-preventable murders. Preventable murders are those which are committed in the course of robbery, rape or secret society activities. On the other hand, non-preventable murders are those committed as a result of passion, revenge or by insane persons or cum suicide. The increase in the number of cases of murder for the first eight months of this year is mainly in the category of non-preventable murders. While in the category of preventable murders, that is, robbery cum murder, secret society murder and rape cum murder which recently has been highlighted by the press, there was only an increase of two cases for the first eight months of this year as compared to the same period last year. There are, however, 10 cases where the motives have still not been established and which are under investigation. (See Annex A).

Further, we have been able to improve upon our clearance rate of criminal cases in the last five years. Our overall clearance rates for seizable crimes have steadily improved from 25.5 per cent in 1978 to 30.8 per cent in 1982. By looking at the categories of serious crime such as murder, rape, housebreaking and robbery, the figures show that the clearance rates have also improved. The clearance rate for murder has improved from 65.9 per cent in 1978 to 83 per cent for 1982. For rape it has improved from 35.6 per cent in 1978 to 56.4 per cent in 1982. For house-breakings it has improved from 20.7 per cent in 1978 to 24 per cent in 1982, and for robberies from 21.1 per cent in 1978 to 21.5 per cent in 1982. By comparing our clearance rate figures for 1981 with other countries we compare quite favourably except only with Japan. For example, in 1981 the overall clearance rate for Singapore was

33 per cent as compared to the United States with a clearance rate of 19.5 per cent. On the other hand, in 1981 Japan achieved an overall clearance rate of 48.1 per cent.

Our improved clearance rates in serious crimes such as murder and rape can be attributed in no small measure to the invaluable help given by our highly skilled forensic science practitioners in the investigation of these cases. In fact their contribution becomes indispensable when we are unable to get eye witnesses to the crime but have to depend on purely circumstantial evidence to prove the prosecution's case in court. The importance of the use of increasingly sophisticated modern technological aids and expertise in investigation to improve clearance rates cannot thus be over-emphasised.

Our Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has since the establishment of the Scene of Crime Unit (SCU) in 1974 been constantly upgrading their standards of investigation not only by better work procedures but by the use of more sophisticated techniques and equipment. More recently the SCU has started the use of chemical methods of finger print examination especially for the development of blood prints, prints on documents and other surfaces. This new method increases the chances of developing prints which hitherto was not possible. The Unit is planning to establish a comprehensive Finger-print Laboratory to improve further the techniques of the examination and development of finger prints. A Technical Support Unit will eventually be set up in the CID to provide technical advice and expertise to the Police Force.

All these developments will no doubt improve further our clearance rate of criminal cases. However, there is a limit to the extent to which clearance rate can be improved by just using sophisticated technology and scientific equipment in the investigation of crime without also getting the public to come forward to give information to the Police and to offer to testify as witnesses. This is clearly shown in the experience of the more developed countries with the exception of Japan, which do not lack in technological expertise and sophisticated equipment but whose clearance rates are still low.

However, in Japan the high clearance rate is mainly due to their policing system known as the Koban system which brings about greater interaction between their public and the Police resulting in the public having complete trust and confidence in the Koban police officers. Because of this the Japanese public do not hesitate to give information and to come forward as witnesses. As a result, more than 60 per cent of the total number of cases solved in Japan are attributed to their Koban police. We therefore decided to introduce this Koban type of community orientated policing system after modifying it to suit our local conditions. We have introduced it in one of our Police Divisions and called it our Neighbourhood Police Post System. This is in essence our two-prong strategy of, on the one hand, getting maximum public co-operation and on the other, improving our methods of investigation through adopting better technology and expertise to up clearance rates and keep down crime.

I see from your programme that you have a wide range of interesting subjects to deliberate upon. I am

sure you will have very stimulating and fruitful discussions during the next four days. It now gives me great pleasure to officially declare open this Congress and wish you all a successful meeting.

BREAKDOWN OF MURDER BY MOTIVE 1980 - AUG 83

	1980		1981		1982		1983																	
							Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sub Total	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	
1) Preventable																								
Robbery cum Murder	12 (7)	)	4 (2)	)	5 (3)	)	1		1(1)	1	1(1)	1			5 (2)	2	1(1)	1			1(1)	1(1)	1(1)	
Secret Society Murder	4 (8)	)2A(16)	3 (3)	)10 (8)	3 (3)	)11 (6)	1(1)							1(1)	2 (2)	1(1)								
Rape cum Murder	8 (1)	)	1 (1)	)	0	)												1						
Ritual Murder	0	)	2 (2)	)	0)																		
2) Non-Preventable																								
Crime of Passion	22(20)	)	20(19)	)	22(22)	)	1(2)		1(1)	3(3)	2(2)	2(2)		3(3)	14(13)	3(3)	2(2)	3(3)	1(1)	1(1)				3(3)
Revenge Murder	1 (1)	)2A(2a)	1 (1)	)3A(27)	7 (2)	)2A(2B)																		
Murder cum Suicide	2 (2)	)	7 (7)	)	2 (2)	)				1(1)			1(1)		2 (2)							1(1)	3(3)	
Murder by Inmate Person	1 (1)	)	0	)	2 (2)	)						2(2)			2 (2)									1(1)
3) Motive Unknown	12		11		5		2					1			3	4		1	3				2	
Total	62(40)	64.5%	49(35)	71.4%	41(34)	82.9%	7(3)	-	2(2)	4(3)	4(4)	5(4)	2(1)	4(4)	28(21)	7(3)	3(3)	5(4)	4(1)	1(1)	2(2)	4(4)	5(3)	

Note: Figures within brackets denote cases cleared within the year.

*1 case with 2 victims (Solely + Remover)
 *1 case with 3 victims (Andrew Road)