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84 - CSC - 4

Release No: 20/APR
11-1/84/04/17

SPEECH BY MR CHUA SIAN CHIN, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS, AT
THE LAUNCHING OF THE CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE AT "THE
PLAZA", BEACH ROAD, ON TUESDAY 17 APRIL 1984 AT 10.00 AM

In the last few years, the overall crime rate in Singapore has been rising. More recently the seriousness and the intensity of violence of the crime committed have also increased. There has been an increase in the number of robberies with firearms. Eighteen such robberies were committed in 1983 as compared to three in 1982. Most of them were committed in the commercial areas of Singapore. However, this rising crime rate is not confined to Singapore but is a worldwide phenomenon occurring in both developed as well as developing countries. Increasing affluence, instead of lowering crime rate, has worsened the crime situation.

Crime is a multi-factorial problem. Thus to combat it requires a multi-disciplinary approach. However, the Police also realise that whatever multi-faceted measures are introduced, whether by way of increasing their expertise and efficiency in combating crime, their effectiveness will still be seriously handicapped unless they get the full and active co-operation of the public. It is not possible to deploy Police presence everywhere. They therefore have to rely on members of the public to report crimes in progress fast enough so that they can arrive on the scene in time to confront and apprehend the criminals. They also need information from the public to plan their deployment strategy as well as to help them in their investigation of crime. To achieve this, one of the most important move of our Police is the adoption of the community orientated policing system.

The Police started off with the launching of the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme (NWS) some three years ago through the Residents' Committees (RCs) in the public housing estates. There are now more than 18,600 NWGs comprising some 84,500 household units participating in the scheme. As a result, the crime rate in the public housing estates is now much lower than in the other areas of Singapore. Last year, we introduced the Neighbourhood Police Post (NPP) System in the Toa Payoh Police Division. Preliminary assessment indicates that the Police have been successful in getting the active co-operation of the residents by winning their confidence and trust. Police reports received by the Toa Payoh Police Division have increased by more than 50 per cent and some of these reports are of great operational value to the Police. The crime rate in Toa Payoh Police Division has gone down by 6 per cent.

On the other hand, the crime rate in the commercial and shopping areas of Singapore has gone up. Housebreaking in shopping and commercial complexes increased from 204 cases in 1981 to 296 cases in 1982 to 324 cases in 1983. Robbery also increased from 59 cases in 1981 to 85 cases in 1982 to 96 cases in 1983. In the case of this complex "The Plaza", it recorded three cases of break-ins in 1982 and another one in 1983. As for robbery, one case was reported in 1982 and another two cases were reported in 1983.

"The Plaza" is an immense complex comprising multifarious shopping units, departmental stores, offices, residential apartments and a hotel. The numerous services it offers bring about a host of bustling activities with large crowds of people moving around. There are now a large number of such complexes in Singapore. More and even bigger ones are coming up. Together they make Singapore a shopper's paradise but at the same time they also attract the criminal elements who also regard them as a "paradise" abounding in opportunities for lucrative gain through armed

robberies and housebreaking. The impersonal relationship between the owners, tenants and management as well as the anonymous crowd of visitors in these complexes facilitate criminals in committing crime and getting away with it. This impersonal relationship and atmosphere also used to pervade our highrise housing estates before our RCs and Residents' Associations (RAs) were formed.

To combat this rising crime problem in our commercial sector the Police had introduced the scheme for the establishment of Crime Prevention Committees or CPCs. The CPCs can be regarded as the counterparts of the RCs and RAs in our highrise residential areas. They provide the vital social infrastructure for the successful operation of our community orientated policing system.

Like the RCs the CPC is a representative body of the owners, tenants, management as well as the residents of the complex. Its main objective is to promote closer co-operation among the occupiers of the complex by generating awareness and participation in crime prevention activities. The Committee meets regularly to monitor the crime situation in the complex and plan crime prevention activities. The Divisional Crime Prevention officer attends the meetings of the CPC and gives advice on crime prevention measures such as the installation of security measures. The CPC is thus fully equipped to advise tenants and the management of the complex on all aspects of crime prevention measures. It can also advise management on the employment and deployment of security guards.

Although quite a number of our commercial complexes employ security guards, it is important that they supplement it by installing physical security measures and devices such as close circuit TVs, hidden cameras and alarm systems. This will not only save manpower but also enable them to be less dependent on human infallibility. This is particularly

important where the complex houses more vulnerable trades such as jewellery and goldsmith shops. Recently we had a spate of armed robberies in these premises. To increase the security of such shops and to deter the criminals the Police have advised among other things the installation of smash resistant glass or grills for their showcases. As a long-term measure, the Police are looking into the feasibility of introducing an "access control" system, which will enable goldsmiths to prevent entry of suspicious or dubious looking persons into vulnerable areas of their premises. This system has been widely adopted in Hongkong where such smash and grab crimes are prevalent.

Further, the tightening of the security of our commercial areas assumes even greater importance when viewed in the context of the increasing number of guest workers and tourists which contributed both to the criminal elements and to the number of potential victims who frequent our shopping complexes. The relative affluence of Singapore has attracted many foreign criminals, many of whom are hardened or professional criminals. Foreigners now account for 13 per cent of all arrested persons although they make up only seven per cent to eight per cent of our population at any one time. Their numbers can be expected to increase.

When launching the CPC scheme the Police conducted a survey and identified 160 commercial and shopping complexes which are vulnerable to crime. To date, 51 of them including "The Plaza" have formed Crime Prevention Committees. I would like to commend all the 51 complexes which have formed the CPCs for their initiative and farsightedness. I also would like to urge the rest to follow their good example and in co-operation with the Police contribute towards a safer environment in our commercial and shopping complexes.

It gives me great pleasure to officially launch the Crime Prevention Committee in this "Plaza" and I wish them every success in their endeavours. *****