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PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY DR RICHARD HU TSU TAU, MINISTER FOR FINANCE
AT THE LAUNCHING OF KRETA AYER NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEME
CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE AT THE CONCOURSE IN FRONT OF
CHINATOWN COMPLEX, BLOCK 335, KRETA AYER ROAD
ON SUNDAY, 18 OCTOBER 1987 AT 2.00 PM**

I am very pleased to have the opportunity of addressing you on the occasion of the launching of the Kreta Ayer Neighbourhood Watch Scheme Co-ordinating Committee.

Although Singapore's crime rate is relatively low compared to many large cities in developed countries, we must not be contented with what we have achieved but should continue to strive for a better and safer society. Crime is a serious social problem that is becoming more pronounced in both developed and developing countries and research studies have shown that the more urbanised and affluent the country, the higher the incidence of crime. It is now generally recognised that poverty and slums are no longer the root causes of crime but that crimes normally occur because criminals are presented with the opportunities.

To check the rising trend in the incidence of crime, it is important we recognise that we have the means to do so within our hands and that crime prevention is a community responsibility. Given the physical structure of housing estates and manpower constraints, it is impossible for the Police to be everywhere all the time.

Since June 1981, the Police and the Residents' Committees have introduced a number of community-oriented projects such as the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme (NWS) and

Boys' Clubs. The NWS is a simple and yet effective programme for residents to help one another to enhance the security of the neighbourhood. Under the scheme, immediate neighbours are encouraged to form Neighbourhood Watch Groups (NWGs) and make informal security arrangements among themselves to protect each other against criminals like house-breakers, thieves and molesters. As the majority of our population is living in compact highrise buildings, it is therefore vital for us to foster neighbourliness among our neighbours.

There are about 4,045 HDB dwelling units in Kreta Ayer Constituency. I am very pleased to note that over 56 per cent of the households in the constituency are already participating in the Scheme, forming 393 Neighbourhood Watch Groups involving 2,139 households. This is a very encouraging trend and it shows that the residents in Kreta Ayer are able to cooperate, have confidence in the Police, and are taking crime prevention very seriously.

I am confident that the formation of the Neighbourhood Watch Groups has contributed materially to a general drop in our constituency's crime rate for the first eight months of this year. There were only five cases of robbery in the first eight months of 1987 compared to 12 cases in the same period last year, a decline of 58 per cent. Over the same period, other major preventable crimes in Kreta Ayer (except housebreaking) have also decreased. Theft of motorcycles declined from 16 cases last year to 13 cases this year, snatch thefts from nine to three cases this year, and there has been no report for cases of outrage of modesty this year compared with the one case last year. It is only in housebreaking that there has been no change, with the number of cases reported this year remaining the same as last year.

Although the crime trend in Kreta Ayer Constituency has improved substantially, there is no room for complacency. Your concerted efforts to bring the crime rate down further must be maintained. Every citizen has a part to play in combating crime and it is by our combined efforts that we can attain a safer society.

The objective of setting up the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme Co-ordinating Committee is to expand the NWS to include neighbours who are not as yet participating in the scheme. The Co-ordinating Committee's task is to reach out to the other 44 per cent of residents who have not joined the Scheme and to encourage them to participate in crime prevention activities. This will include house to house visits by the Committee and crime prevention exhibitions organised with the help of the Police. They will also be briefed regularly on crime scenario and related crime prevention measures. Through these activities it is hoped that the level of crime prevention awareness among our residents would be raised and the importance of crime prevention better understood.

The Neighbourhood Police Post (NPP) in Kreta Ayer Constituency is scheduled to be set up in the last quarter of next year. Meanwhile, the setting up of this NWS Co-ordinating Committee is a timely step towards making our neighbourhood safer.

I would now like to thank all those who have come forward to serve on this Co-ordinating Committee, as well as the Kreta Ayer Residents' Committees, and the Police who have helped to make this occasion a success.

It is a great pleasure for me to officially launch the NWS Co-ordinating Committee. @@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@