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SPEECH BY MR HOWE YOON CHONG, MINISTER FOR HEALTH,  
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE POTONG PASIR NEIGHBOURHOOD  
POLICE POST ON SUNDAY, 5 AUGUST 1984 AT 11 AM

Many of us have the tendency to find fault in others. Singaporeans are fond of making complaints. When it comes to public order and security, it is always easy to blame the Police Force for many things: when the crime rate goes up, when there is a spate of petty thievery, when vehicles are stolen, or when stringent action is taken against motorists who disobey the rules. For these and a host of other reasons, it is easy to ask why did the police not do this or that. But when it comes to helping the police to do their job, like providing them with information, coming forward to testify against apprehended criminals, or helping the police to prevent crime, more often than not the vociferous citizen is found wanting.

Please remember that law and order, safety and security are all two-way. If people disobey the law, then there will be a threat to security. Where there is no order there will be a chaos and your safety will be threatened. Thus we must ourselves be law-abiding, teach our children to be so and advise others not to break the law. Should all these fail, we will need to deter or prevent crime, report suspicious activities, and provide the police with information and the needed evidence to let the law deal with the criminals.

Very few people understand or will take the trouble to find out that the Police Force has been labouring under many handicaps and disadvantages. The police are made out to be always threatening, inconveniencing, bullying,

harrassing, and arresting innocent people. The consequence is that no one will lift a finger to assist when it comes to providing needed information or apprehending criminals. Without information or assistance police work becomes much more difficult. Criminals get away and public order and safety suffer.

The lack of confidence in the police or in the ability of the police to protect the citizens makes some people seek alternative arrangements to look after themselves. It can even result in citizens seeking to protect themselves against the police. This gives rise to secret societies and gangsters, protection rackets, and criminal syndicates.

The lack of faith in the police, the lack of contact with the police, the lack of understanding and rapport with the police, keeps the police and the people separated and in constant confrontation.

Happily over the last twenty five years much of all these have been undergoing drastic change. The police have been putting their house in order. This is an admission of their shortcomings and a desire to improve. They now adopt new systems of operations, new methods of getting to know the people, to make friends, and to establish understanding with the community and its leaders. Their sincere desire to change for the better must be given enthusiastic support and encouragement. Citizens must accept the police as their protectors and friends. Every citizen must work to assist the police rather than against them.

The Japanese system of enlisting public cooperation to prevent crime is now being adopted by the police in the form of the Neighbourhood Police Post. Our community is fortunate to have this NPP to reduce the crime rate and to make Potong Pasir a safer place for everybody. We must give the Police every help and support to make the NPP a success.

The Neighbourhood Police Post system is a big step forward to bring friendship to the doorsteps of the people. It requires the mutual involvement of the police and the grassroot organizations. In the process residents will learn about law and order, law enforcement and get to understand the work of the Police. The NPP can offer many additional services; like change of address on identity cards, advising on directions, referral service to proper organizations to deal with problems, putting identification marks on your appliances, etc.

The very presence of the police at the NPP is a salutary factor. Its foot-patrols and bicycle patrols, round-the-clock patrol of crime-prone areas, regular patrols on vacant plots, void decks, deserted roads, corridors, shopping and hawker centres, markets and bus terminals, will all improve the sense of security of the community. They will give added confidence to citizens to help their friendly policeman fight crime. They will encourage the Police to perform better.

The Toa Payoh Housing Estate covers eight constituencies including Potong Pasir. They have all benefitted from the NPP's presence for more than a year. The Police personnel of the NPP's are also getting satisfaction out of their work. Crime rates have come down. The people feel more secure. Generally everyone is now more conscious of the police presence. They have come to accept the police as friends. The police are getting more cooperation and assistance in their work. The grassroot leaders of the community have also responded positively to the NPP system. All these speak well for the future of the NPP system. I am indeed glad to declare the Potong Pasir NPP officially open for the benefit of the constituents and for better relationship and friendship between the police and the people.

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