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SPEECH BY DR SEET AI MEE, MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION, AT THE PRIZE PRESENTATION CEREMONY OF THE CRIME PREVENTION POSTER DESIGN COMPETITION FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS AT RAFFLES CITY SHOPPING CENTRE ATRIUM ON SATURDAY, 4 MARCH 1989 AT 10.00 AM

It is good to see so many of you here this morning involved in a Crime Prevention Education Programme.

Keeping crime in check is a tremendous task. While the law enforcement agencies like the Police are entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that this is so, they need the support and co-operation of all civic-minded members of the public, young and old.

To enhance public participation, the Police, working hand in hand with other grassroots organisations, other agencies and some trade bodies, have devised a number of crime prevention programmes, among which are the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme in residential areas, Crime Prevention Committees in shopping complexes, and the setting up of Police Boys' Clubs to cater for neighbourhood youths. Whilst these programmes are meant for the general public and the business community, it is the crime prevention education programme in schools that specifically provides for inculcation of crime prevention awareness among our students.

Introduced in primary and secondary schools in January 1987, the crime prevention education programme in schools which is a joint project between the Police and the Ministry of Education is now being taught to students between Primary Four and Secondary Two.

Today, some 136,000 students from these classes are receiving crime prevention lessons. "Why school children?" You may ask:

- a. Firstly, being young, they are receptive to morals teaching.
- b. Secondly, because they are young, they are vulnerable to crime and could become victims of crime. Hence, desirably crime prevention habits and attitudes could be systematically inculcated into them as a means of protection.

The crime prevention education programme in our schools itself has three-fold objectives:

- A. It is intended to inculcate in our students awareness of crime prevention and the means they can take to protect themselves against criminals.
- B. It impresses upon them that criminal activities are unacceptable to themselves as individuals, as well as to society.
- C. It instills in them an understanding of the work of the Police so that they will have a good relationship with the Police.

These objectives will, not only, make students more aware of crime prevention, but it will also make them into better citizens of tomorrow.

To illustrate the earlier points I would like to refer to a story of a Chicago gangster: John Dillinger by name.

Dillinger was a rough, tough and rude boy and he gave his Sunday school teachers a very bad time. Finally after many trials and after much consultation, the Sunday school Superintendent called him up and dismissed him with the words "Go and Never Come back."

He never came back. He began a career of crime and bloodshed never equalled in modern times.

One day he was killed at a Chicago theatre entrance, his body riddled with bullets.

A Chicago newspaper, the next day put out an unusual picture on the front page. Only the feet of the desperado showed under the caption "These are the feet of John Dillinger." The editorial comment was heart searching. I quote, "Who knows where these feet might have gone if someone had guided them aright."

Today, I ask the same question: Are we in Singapore guiding our children and youth aright?

This story very ably illustrates the message of our crime prevention education programme. Teach them young. Reach them young.

However lest we fall prey to the thinking that Crime Prevention and Moral Education is the task of teachers, police officers and schools only, let me quote you other illustrations.

In a country wide survey in the USA, it was found that the incidence of Chinese delinquents were the lowest in the country. When Chinese teachers were questioned they quoted a precept of Confucius: "The misconduct of the child is the fault of the parents."

In a women's magazine a heart broken mother wrote the following:-

"I reared a Criminal" from "Ladies Home Journal"

"We loved him but

His father was too busy to be with him when he was young.

I couldn't bring myself to punish him for misbehaviour.

We sided against his

teachers when they complained about his work and conduct in school.

As he grew up he would hardly discuss the time of day with us.

He was expelled from school.

We gave him money so he wouldn't steal again.

I wept when the police called and I had to turn my boy to them."

Yes. Parents play a major role in child rearing and child discipline.

Parents in the home, teachers in the school, responsible adults in our society and law enforcers in Singapore all have responsibilities to play in teaching moral values to our young.

"Values are taught and caught". This is a common and a very true saying. Our children learn from not only our words but also our lives. These values have their source in our major religions and philosophies and act as anchors for our children in the midst of our fast changing society.

While much has been said about the ills of so called "pseudo-Westernisation" - permit me to say that these ills

are a direct result of our rapid scientific and technological developments. As a nation we have benefitted economically from Western sciences and technological developments - as a nation we have suffered the side effects of deculturalisation and exposure to modernism and its values.

Our attempt to teach Asian Core Values in schools is an attempt to provide our children with roots and anchors for good moral and societal behaviour. Parents, teachers and elders in the community, as in the past, will continue to play roles of exemplars and educators of the values we wish to propagate and wish our young to inculcate.

Looking at the posters before me, I am encouraged by excellent participation. Today's competition has generated much greater interest in the subject of Crime Prevention and I would like to thank the Police for organising this Competition as it allows students an avenue to express on paper what they have learnt since the introduction of crime prevention education in 1987.

In conclusion, I wish to compliment the organisers from the Ministry of Education, the Police and the Lianhe Zaobao and the various sponsors for helping to promote crime prevention awareness in our young by organising this Competition. Congratulations are also in order for the winners. Your efforts have been judged to be among the best of the hundreds of entries received.

Thank you for inviting me to share in this event.

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