

# Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

Information Division, Ministry of Culture, City Hall, Singapore 0617 • tel. 3378191 ext. 352, 353, 354/3362207/3362271

Archives & Oral History Department  
Singapore - 4 JUL 1981

12-2/81/06/26

ACC NO.

NAME

81 0068

35

SPEECH BY DR WONG KWEI CHEONG, MINISTER OF STATE (LABOUR)  
AND MP FOR CAIRNHILL AT THE OPENING OF THE CRIME PREVENTION  
EXHIBITION AT PLAZA SINGAPURA ON FRI 26 JUN 81 AT 1930 HOURS

Our successful economic development programme coupled with effective implementation of social programmes in education, housing and welfare have given us full employment, political stability, and a reasonable high standard of living. When we look around us, we can see many high-rise buildings that have gone up all over the island; more people are engaged in leisure activities like shopping, sports and games, and entertainment; increasing number of fast food centres have been established and are well patronised; and of course the rising number of cars on the road. These are some of the signs that reflect the growing affluence of our society. In short, we have our basic needs well catered for.

We should, however, bear in mind that all these can disappear if we do not take care of them. To sustain and to improve our standard of living, there is a need for all of us to work together as a team to utilise all our resources effectively. One way of achieving this is to improve our productivity so that we can increase the competitiveness of our country's goods and services, thereby ensuring our economic progress and hence improving our standard of living. It is not my intention to dwell on this subject this evening. I propose to touch on another related matter.

Rapid social change and economic prosperity enable many of us to own homes and luxury goods like televisions, motor vehicles, and jewellery. The negative effect of this is that it has created opportunities for crime. This has come about because as people become more well-off, they tend to become complacent and take things for granted. They become self-centred. They also become more careless with their possessions.

...../2.

Our crime rate in 1979 was 1,036 seizable offences per 100,000 population. This was an increase of about 25 per cent over the 1978 figure. Last year, there was a further increase of 18 per cent over the 1979 figure. The rises were mainly in preventable property offences such as robberies, house-breakings and thefts of all categories. While our crime situation compares favourably with cities of the same population size elsewhere, it has nevertheless deteriorated. Worst still, statistics from the police have shown that over 60 per cent of the seizable offences recorded in Singapore could have been prevented if the victims had taken better security measures and greater care.

We can, to a certain extent, conclude that many people tend to regard all matters related to crime as an entirely police reserve. It has resulted in the "It Won't Happen To Me" syndrome. This is bad. Our attitude must change.

Crime is a community problem. Crime prevention should therefore be a community responsibility. It is physically impossible for the police on their own to cover every street, business and commercial premises, housing estates and homes throughout the 24 hours each day. It is therefore imperative that all of us work with the police to implement crime prevention measures to protect our properties and ourselves. Team-work is essential if we want a crime-free environment.

The theme for this year's National Crime Prevention Campaign is "You Can Help Prevent Crime". This message aims to create a greater crime prevention awareness among our people. It pinpoints on how each of us can help to fight against crime. How effective this will be depends entirely on your efforts.

You may wish to know that the Police, on their part, have also implemented measures on crime prevention. They offer free advice to individuals, households, commercial organisations and industries on the measures they could take to prevent crime. Early this year, the Police expanded their service in this area by setting up a new Crime Prevention and Community Relations Department. The Police can therefore provide a more professional and expeditious service.

All Residents' Committees and Citizen's Consultative Committees led by their respective Members of Parliament, will also actively

participate in this year's National Crime Prevention Campaign. They will liaise closely with the Police in promoting the "Neighbourhood Watch". The Neighbourhood Watch is a scheme whereby immediate neighbours band together, get to know one another as well as one another's family routines particularly with regard to movements to and from home. They then work out arrangements to help one another protect themselves against robbers, thieves and molesters by looking after each others' home and well-being. The Neighbourhood Watch means being concerned when strangers are seen near a neighbour's home, along the corridors and stairways or near lifts. It also means keeping a friendly eye on your neighbour's children and helping to escort them when leaving or returning home particularly during the hours of darkness within the housing estate. In short the Neighbourhood Watch is the friendly way of keeping your neighbourhood safe and crime free. You are urged to give your full cooperation and support by doing so, you will be ensuring a safer and crime free environment for yourselves and your families.

All these new measures on the part of the police and the active participation of MPs and residents' committees would not be effective without your close cooperation and support. I therefore hope that you will seriously study the exhibits in this exhibition as it aims to inform you how the prevalent crimes are committed, the consequences and how you as a member of the community can take steps to prevent such crimes. I strongly urge all of you to seriously view the exhibits, take back and study the crime prevention literatures and make conscious efforts to implement them in your homes and in respect of other properties. You should also spread the crime prevention message amongst your family, neighbours and friends. This is one sure way of countering the threats posed by the criminals. For it is only through team effort and your keen awareness in crime prevention will we be able to achieve a crime-free society.

The Police Message to you in this Exhibition is "You Can Help Prevent Crime". My own message to you is "Protect What We Have Worked So Hard To Achieve".

On this note, ladies and gentlemen, I have the pleasure of declaring the Crime Prevention Exhibition Open.