



# UR GUARDIANS



KEEPING SINGAPORE SAFE AND SECURE SINCE THE 1950s

KOH BUCK SONG

OUR  
**GUARDIANS**

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Straits Times Press

Published by Straits Times Press Pte Ltd  
Singapore Press Holdings  
Mezzanine Floor, Information Resource Centre  
Level 3, Podium Block  
1000 Toa Payoh North, News Centre  
Singapore 318994  
Tel: (65) 6319 6319 Fax: (65) 6319 8258  
stpressbooks@sph.com.sg  
www.stpressbooks.com.sg

#### STRAITS TIMES PRESS

General Manager Susan Long  
Publishing Manager Shova Loh  
Operations Manager Juliet Lee  
Marketing Manager Ilangoh Thanabalan  
Creative Director Lock Hong Liang

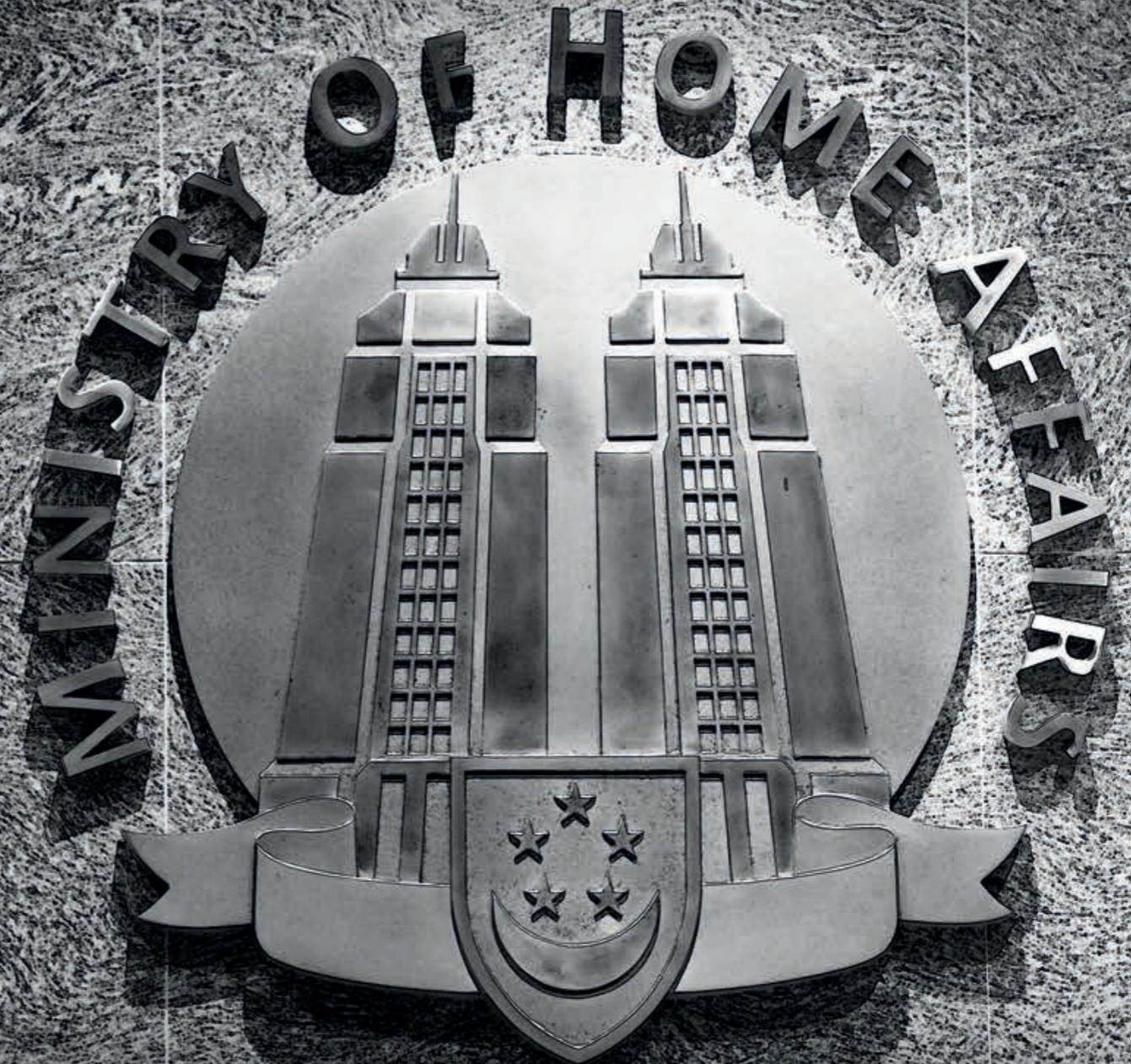
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Printed in Malaysia

National Library Board, Singapore  
Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Names: Koh, Buck Song. | Straits Times Press Pte. Ltd., publisher.  
Title: Our guardians : keeping Singapore safe and secure since the 1950s / Koh Buck Song.  
Other titles: Keeping Singapore safe and secure since the 1950s.  
Description: Singapore : Straits Times Press Pte Ltd, [2016]  
Identifiers: OCN 932368706 | ISBN 978-981-46-4241-5 (hardcover) | ISBN 978-981-46-4242-2 (paperback)  
Subjects: LCSH: Singapore. Ministry of Home Affairs. | Singapore. Ministry of Home Affairs—History. | Internal security—Singapore. | Internal security—Singapore—History.  
Classification: LCC HV8253.A2 | DDC 352.379095957—dc23



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Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

This Home Team SG50 publication chronicles the role that the Ministry of Home Affairs has played in nation building by ensuring a safe and secure home for Singaporeans. It recalls the security challenges we have faced, how we overcame them, and the key milestones over the decades. It also brings to life the dedication, spirit, values and ethos of the men and women of the Home Team who made it possible – our pioneers, past and serving officers, NSFs, NSmen, volunteers and community partners.

The Ministry and its departments and agencies have continually built new capabilities to tackle new and emerging security challenges. Today, the Singapore Police Force, Internal Security Department, Singapore Civil Defence Force, Immigration & Checkpoints Authority, Singapore Prison Service, Central Narcotics Bureau, Home Team Academy, Casino Regulatory Authority and Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises work closely with the Ministry Headquarters, as part of one integrated Home Team. Since its introduction in 1997, the Home Team concept has made good progress, and is embodied today in key areas such as joint operations, integrated strategic and resource planning, and joint training.

At the heart of the Home Team's effectiveness is its people. The book features several of the good men and women of the Home Team, from our pioneers who laid the foundation for our security, to our dedicated officers, NSFs, NSmen and volunteers who continue to serve our nation daily, keeping us safe. Thank you very much for working tirelessly round-the-clock, 365 days a year to keep Singapore and Singaporeans safe and secure.

As we celebrate SG50, it is opportune that the Home Team reflects on our past, builds on what we have achieved, and continually strives to make Singapore even safer and more secure as we progress towards SG100.

**Teo Chee Hean**

Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating  
Minister for National Security



Policewomen in the 1980s training to tackle mob attacks. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

Police detaining rioters during the bloody Hock Lee bus riots, which occurred on 12 May 1955. The incident was instigated by the communists.  
*Photo: Singapore Press Holdings*





The July 1964 racial riots were triggered following an attempt by a Federal Reserve Unit constable to enforce order upon rowdy participants during a procession to celebrate the Prophet Muhammad's birthday. The violence that ensued led to a curfew being imposed. The entire Police Force was sent to trouble spots.  
*Photo: Singapore Press Holdings*



Strikers participating in a meeting, shouting slogans and singing songs during the communist-instigated Hock Lee bus strike that erupted into deadly riots on 12 May 1955. *Photo: Singapore Press Holdings*



A detective, his face and clothes smeared with burning petrol, walks away after his car had been destroyed by rioters during the Hock Lee bus riots.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings



A mob attacking a Volunteer Special Constable with *changkols*, sticks and stones during the Hock Lee bus riots.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings



The contingents that participated in Singapore's first National Day Parade included representatives from the Army, Navy, Police, youth groups, cultural societies and schools.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

01

# Securing A New Nation

SUPPORTING SINGAPORE'S  
SELF-RULE, WITH HELP  
FROM THE *KAMPONGS*



“THE POLICE  
FORCE BELONGS  
TO THE PEOPLE OF  
SINGAPORE.”

GOH KENG SWEE  
FORMER MINISTER OF THE  
INTERIOR AND DEFENCE,  
AUGUST 1966

Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

1959 – 1969

### ► ON OUR OWN FEET

**In 1959**, for the first time since the arrival of the British colonial powers in the 19th century, Singapore attained internal self-government. The British colonial administration controlled external relations (defence and non-commercial foreign affairs) and shared control of several key internal policies such as internal security. Earlier that year, the People's Action Party, led by Mr Lee Kuan Yew, won the Legislative Assembly general election. This first taste of freedom must have arrived accompanied by an unaccustomed blend of some headiness and hesitation, given the novelty of liberation to be able to take charge of one's own future. But some reservations must surely also have lingered, for liberty amounts to little if it is bereft of a foundation of peace and order, of safety and security.

It was in this context of a new state finding its feet that Singapore began to shore up its security on its own. The Police Force became increasingly "Asianised", with more local-born officers, especially Eurasians, taking up senior positions. In 1963, John Le Cain, a Eurasian officer, who moved to Singapore when he was two years old, took charge of the Force for the first time. He was promoted to Commissioner a year later. At the same time, there was a landmark transition underway for Singapore – to transform the police and other security forces from being an instrument of colonial control into a source of self-confidence in public safety. As then Interior and Defence Minister Goh Keng Swee said succinctly in a speech in August 1966: "The Police Force belongs to the people of Singapore."

### ► EARLY BORDER CONTROL

To boost the security of this new state, immigration control was tightened, mainly by cutting down on the classes of persons with the right of entry for permanent residency. The Immigration Department was reorganised for greater efficiency. On 20 July 1960, the Coast Guard Operations were formed to protect Singapore's

coastline, centralising seafront patrol duties by the Police, Customs and Immigration under the command of a Director of Operations, with each Director appointed for six months from either the Customs, Immigration or Police Department.

Some changes were made for agencies to move nearer to the people. For example, the Immigration Depot was moved from the old protected premises of the East Wharf to the public-access spot of Telok Ayer Basin.

Mr Mohd Anwar bin Abdullah alias Teo Ah Hock, who joined the Immigration Department in 1967, recalls how he and his colleagues had to be meticulous about verifying the identities of persons passing through Singapore's borders. Some of these included coolies and merchants carrying with them goods such as tin, oil, rubber and fish. When a train from Johor Baru pulled into Tanjong Pagar Railway Station, he and a colleague would board from opposite ends to systematically clear the passengers from both ends before meeting at the centre carriage. To perform this duty, he would be picked up from his home at 4am. Working through the night was all in the line of duty.

**"There is no day, no night; anytime they call, we have to go."**



Mr Mohd Anwar Teo.  
Photo: Home Team Academy

One memorable mission which lasted from midnight to dawn was an ambush operation mounted to trap and arrest the mastermind of an illegal immigrant syndicate who was arriving in a boat operated stealthily in the night by a Malaysian couple.

"We caught all of them ... after such results, everyone was very, very happy," Mr Anwar Teo adds.

### ► PART OF THE KAMPONG CULTURE

To achieve better safety and security, much effort was required by the police and other security agencies to work towards having closer collaboration with the people. But more importantly, the police and the people needed to join hands in the *kampongs*, where the majority of the population had made their homes, many in squatter settlements. Under the British, the public housing agency called the Singapore Improvement Trust had built just 27,000 dwelling units in the 32 years between 1927 and 1959. Much of Singapore was still countryside. The Chinese *kampongs* were largely organised along dialect groups, just like in China where they had come from. Each village would have a temple acting as a nucleus, around which social life revolved. The *kampongs* already had their own system of rudimentary self-protection against the predatory roving gangs that were rife at that time. Thus, a vital role in sustaining social harmony and public order was played by the *kampongs* and their residents. The police would have to connect with, and tap into, some of this community energy – something that they would always have to do henceforth.



Secret society initiation rites.  
Photo: Singapore Police Force

With self-government, the laws began to reflect the will of the people rather than that of the Crown. And there were many tasks at hand. Crime-fighting at that time was akin to doing battle. Compared with the typical felons of later decades, who operated mostly as lone rangers and were only lightly armed, the criminals of the 1960s were more formidable. Secret societies were organised along the same basic principles as the triads and mafia in other countries. In Singapore, they were mostly gangs of young men who had to undergo initiation rites and were sworn into group loyalty, demonstrated by the use of features such as the use of code numbering for group identity, flamboyant body tattoos and lethal weapons. From petty theft

to kidnapping and murder, constant threats to the community, self and property left little room for peace of mind.

### ► OPERATION SENJATA: ENDING THE “REIGN OF TERROR”

To quash the secret society threat, one quarter of the Police Force was deployed for Operation *Senjata* in July 1961 and was activated periodically over the next four years. The mission involved the land divisions, the Reserve Unit (trained to deal with civil unrest), the Gurkha contingent (a troop comprising Nepalese officers, inherited from the British) and the Volunteer Special Constabulary. Even when apprehended, the gangsters were incorrigible and did not cease their activities. In July 1963, more than 200 detainees, mostly hard-core secret society members, rioted at Pulau Senang, where an open-concept detention settlement was being operated. The rioters burnt the settlement and killed three prison officers. Mr Yahya bin Mat Som, who later became an officer of the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority’s Coastal Command, and another officer, Mr Aim bin Dol, raced to Pulau Senang in a speedboat with Gurkha police officers once they were informed of the riot. Mr Yahya still remembers exclaiming “Oh my Allah!” when he saw the carnage through the flames and thick smoke. Despite the shock, he went about his job, steadily and determinedly carrying casualties back to the boat and then rushing to the mainland to seek medical help. The Reserve Unit was called in to quell the riot and the Police Dog Unit was mobilised to track down those who tried to escape. Order was restored, and this was to be the last case of prison unrest for subsequent decades.



Pulau Senang riot victims were flown by helicopter to the mainland.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

The Hill Street Police Station was where the Arms and Explosives Branch of the Police Department operated from 1949 to 1981. The building was gazetted as a national monument on 18 December 1998, and is now occupied by the Ministry of Communications and Information and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, including the National Arts Council, the National Heritage Board and the Media Development Authority.

Photo: Singapore Police Force



The police continued to conduct sustained action against the secret societies until they were eventually largely suppressed by the 1970s. Even into the mid-1970s, *The Straits Times* was still reporting on measures to tackle the secret societies' "reign of terror" – for example, in the housing estate of Toa Payoh, which was then still known as "the Chicago of Singapore", a reference to the then-famous gangster city of the United States. Gang fights were a common occurrence, with lives lost and properties destroyed. A long-time Toa Payoh resident, Mr Ng Giak Hai, whose family owned a grocery shop and made *tau kwa* (dried bean curd), recalls his father telling him how the secret society members would shoot the tyres of police cars that ventured into the Toa Payoh area. The gangsters would then attack the officers trapped in their cars in the hostile terrain, he shared in an interview for the National Heritage Board. Undeterred by the brazenness of these gangs, the police took sustained action across the island and prevailed in the war of attrition against these Singapore-style triads. This called for dedication and determination of a level to match the staunch recklessness of these criminals who had nothing to lose. The evidence spoke for itself. In 1959, 416 secret society incidents and 21 gang-related murders were reported. By 1983, the numbers had dwindled to 12 incidents and two murders. Today, reports of incidents involving secret societies are few and far between.

### ► LABOUR UNREST IN UNCERTAIN ECONOMIC TIMES

Criminal elements aside, the civilian population itself had not found equilibrium. The economy was not yet stable and self-sustaining enough for everyone to find contentment in making a living. Another major challenge that had to be met in those days was the need to police labour unrest. The colonial government's laissez-faire manner in managing the economy and labour market over many years was starting to bear negative consequences. Communist agitation, instigation and exploitation of grievances – some genuine – over wages and conditions of work further contributed to the growing labour unrest. The number of man-hours lost to strike action had risen from 150,000 in 1960 to a whopping 400,000 in 1961.

A new "D" troop was formed in the Reserve Unit to specialise in combating labour unrest. Trained by then Superintendent Tan Teck Khim (who later became Commissioner of Police from 1971 to 1979), this troop was schooled in skills such as unarmed combat, so as to use minimal force in dealing with industrial disputes and strikes. The troop was disbanded in 1962, after the incidence of labour unrest had fallen and the land divisions could handle such incidents on their own. In dealing with labour unrest, police officers had to be impartial, so that they did not lay themselves open to charges of partisanship in their dealings with management, unionists and workers on strike.

Added to the discontentment among the urban workforce were the potentially explosive external forces that threatened to wreck the flimsiest points in the structure of society. For example, the communist threat had remained from the post-war period, through the 1950s into the 1960s, exploiting sentiments such as Chinese chauvinism and labour unrest to destabilise society for political and ideological ends. In February 1963, the Singapore Police Force (SPF) worked together with their Malayan counterparts to launch Operation Coldstore to crack down on the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) and the United Front leaders and supporters in Singapore in order to pre-empt any attempt by the communists to mount violence and disrupt merger



An act of arson carried out by communists in the 1950s. Public vehicles, such as British-owned Singapore Traction Company buses, were often targeted by the communists. Photo: Ministry of Home Affairs

with Malaya. The CPM was to remain a constant threat for decades to come, with its armed forces and underground networks, even if incidents of wanton violence had declined compared to the period from 1948 to 1956.

### ► LAW BEFORE ORDER, OR ORDER BEFORE LAW?

The turbulence of these times – both external and internal – formed the historical backdrop to the development of what can be seen as a central tenet of the main guiding philosophy towards the maintenance of law and order in Singapore. In a speech to the University of Singapore Law Society on 18 January 1962, Singapore's first Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, argued that while in “a settled and established society, law appears to be a precursor of order”, in emerging ones wracked by violence and subversion, the reverse was often the case:

### “Without order, the operation of law is impossible.”

At the time of this speech, Cold War tensions were headed towards a dangerous end, with the world caught in a state of political and military friction between the United States and its allies, and the Soviet Union and its allies from 1947 to 1991. Singapore and Malaya were then very much at the frontline in the ideological and geopolitical conflict between the Western and Eastern blocs. It was with this wider backdrop in mind that Mr Lee added that the “realities of the sociological and political milieu in Malaya and of the world of 1962 are that if you allow these shibboleths of ‘law and order’ to be uttered out of context”, without reference to “the actual social and political conditions we are in”, disaster may strike, simply because in “the last analysis, if the state disintegrates, then the rules of all laws must vanish”.

In his analysis of this speech, Associate Professor Kumar Ramakrishna from the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University said, in a March 2015 RSIS commentary, that Mr Lee saw the rule of law as utterly integral to the successful political and economic development of Singapore. However, Mr Lee's view of the rule of law was one that was subordinate to Singapore's needs and not vice versa. He rejected an un-contextualised, abstract conception of the law. In particular, the experiences of fighting the communists in the 1950s and 1960s engendered in Mr Lee the conviction that order should always precede and establish the basis for legal frameworks. For Mr Lee, the lesson from that struggle – quite clearly the defining experience that shaped much of his outlook on politics and governance – was clear: Singapore needed order as the wellspring of everything else – especially the economic security that a polyglot, immigrant, multiracial society needed as an initial basis for gluing its disparate elements together. Some have argued that, after five decades of independence, Singapore had become established enough as a society to review such ideas about the pre-eminence of order and law. But, in more ways than one, the mindset and outlook framed by this notion still continues to influence the approach and application of measures to maintain order and law in Singapore.





Media headlines on two major racial riots that erupted on 21 July 1964 and 2 September 1964.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

the presence of the police deterred the troublemakers from engaging in a tit-for-tat action against the Malays.

#### ► HUNTING DOWN THE TROUBLEMAKERS AND PROTECTING THE INNOCENT

When riots broke out in July 1964, Mr Selwyne Terrance Amerasinghe was attached to “E” Division, near the epicentre of the riots. He noticed that, despite the curfew and extensive patrolling, the incidents of hit-and-run assaults and vandalism within “E” Division remained high. Analysing the situation, he came to the conclusion that the perpetrators of the incidents were holed up within certain trouble spots. So he decided that the best way to address the problem was to carry out a house-to-house search and weed out the probable troublemakers.

His tactic paid off. He and his team rounded up several suspicious characters who were later identified to have had secret society connections. Mr Amerasinghe’s tactic worked so well that the Police Headquarters Operations Room soon sent out a teleprinter message to all divisions instructing that they round up secret society members found in their trouble spots and deal with them as “E” Division had done.

Mr Thambiah Letchamanan was on leave the day the riots started and he was recalled to the Beach Road Police Station where he found himself in command. He recalls: “Back then, Raffles Girls School was located at Queen Street. ... The girls had just ended school and were stuck in the middle of hundreds of people fighting.”

Prioritising their safety, he called the Singapore Armed Forces for trucks to transport the girls back home safely and opened his station as a temporary shelter while waiting for the trucks.

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**“The kids were stranded, so it was the most obvious choice to me to use the station as a shelter. We made calls to the now-closed Satay Club to have them come over and provide food for the people in the shelter.”**

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He also sent as many officers as he could find to the Boyanese settlement at Crawford Street, which was at risk of being attacked by Chinese rioters. He was determined to make sure that no more lives were lost that day. “The Boyanese were the minority in an area that was populated by the Chinese. It was our responsibility to make sure that they were protected.”

His handling of the riots caught the attention of his superiors and he was promoted to Acting Deputy Superintendent of the Beach Road Police Station.

#### ► HELPING THE COMMUNITY HEAL

On 2 September, another riot broke the peace, sparked off by tensions lingering after the riots in July. The Police Force was once again mobilised and did not stand down until 14 September. Once more, officers had to pick up their riot shields and

also their courage and their conviction that their country was worth protecting. The three-day spate of violence stretching from Geylang Serai to Kampong Chai Chee left 13 people killed and over 100 injured.

Remembering the September riots, Mr Lionel de Souza says: “The best of friends became enemies, they became suspicious of each other.”

After the riots, Cabinet Ministers including Lee Kuan Yew, Othman Wok and S Rajaratnam walked about the villages meeting with the village chiefs. The village chiefs were respected figures who were elected by the villagers. They were important in helping the government win ground support for their policies and perspectives.

Mr Othman Wok, then Minister for Social Affairs, called on the people to give information to the police to help capture elements inciting unrest and spreading rumours. The eyes and ears of the dwellers of the *kampongs* would be vital in providing early warning of trouble. The late Police Staff Sergeant (Retired) Fareed Khan, who was stationed at Mount Vernon, recalled being on 24-hour standby. It was a time that truly called for dedication and vigilance. Plain-clothed officers patrolled especially around areas such as Geylang and Jalan Besar. During that period, some 1,400 culprits were arrested, 154 charged and 268 placed under preventive detention.

### ► **KONFRONTASI: THE UNDECLARED WAR**

At the same time, Singapore also had to contend with the onset of *Konfrontasi*. Then Indonesian President Sukarno had claimed that the Borneo territories should be granted independence first, before any discussion about the formation of Malaysia. This led to the setting up of a United Nations (UN) survey to determine the will of the people in those two states regarding the merger. The UN survey reported that the majority of the people of Sabah and Sarawak were supportive of the merger, results which then President Sukarno rejected. This led to Indonesia severing relations with Malaysia, intensifying its harassments and armed incursions into Malaysian territories, as well as launching insurgency and

sabotage operations in Sarawak, Sabah and Singapore. Singapore was a natural target for its geographical proximity and political prominence. At least 42 bombing incidents were carried out in Singapore by Indonesian saboteurs, killing seven people and injuring more than 50 others.

During this period, other departments besides the Police Force also had to rise to the call of duty to help keep Singapore safe. For example, Mr Anwar Teo, who joined the Immigration Department in 1967 and retired as a Senior Checkpoint Inspector (I) at Airport Command in 2008, had to do 24-hour shipping duties at Telok Ayer Basin. Life and limb were risked, without question. He recalls: “We cleared vessels in and out ... some empty tankers were about three storeys high. There was no gangway for you to go up, you had to climb up a rope ladder. So, if you slipped, you would fall straight down!”

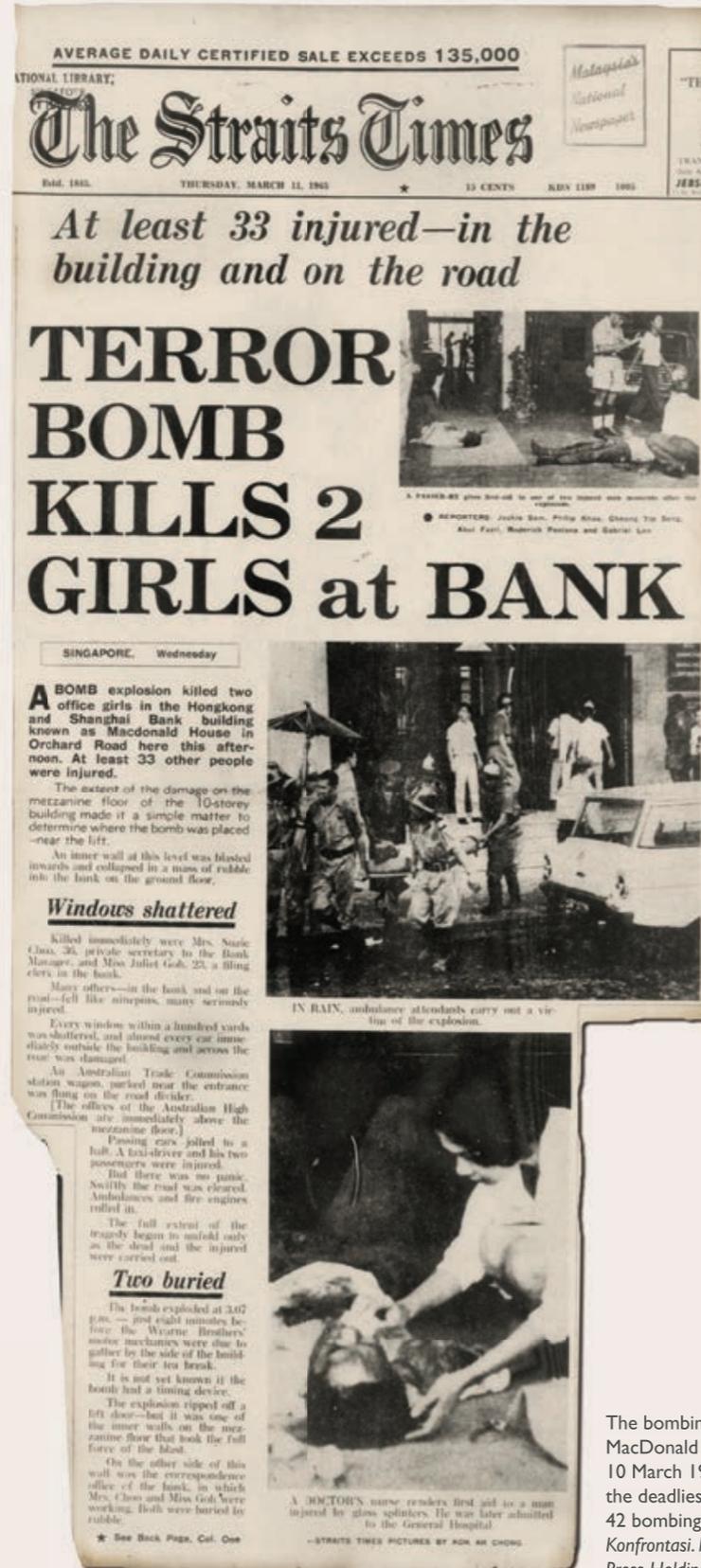
But it would be another few more months before the trouble would really subside. On 10 March 1965, a time bomb at MacDonald House on Orchard Road left a gaping hole in a wall of the building, killing three and injuring 33 others. The police arrested two Indonesian saboteurs who were attempting to escape on a boat when they capsized and were rescued by a fisherman. They were then handed over to the Police Coast Guard. Both admitted to their involvement in the bombing attack upon interrogation.

When the bomb went off at MacDonald House, Mr Eugene Wong was an Inspector in “A” Division. He recalls being the first officer on the scene.

**“I was the first officer to go there from “A” Division, even before the CID. Of course, the radio car was first and then the Police Reserve Unit and all came in and they cordoned off the area. Very quickly, I assessed that there was a bombing and people were injured. ... I had this feeling that there would be another bomb. ... I ran up the stairs into the building to tell the occupants to leave the place.”**



Mr Eugene Wong.  
Photo: Home Team Academy



The bombing of Macdonald House on 10 March 1965 was the deadliest of at least 42 bombings during Konfrontasi. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings



The MacDonald House bombing killed two office girls as well as a driver, and injured at least 33 other people. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

There was no second explosion, but he had been trained to take quick action: “Civil servants should have this instinct. Police officers know that we should not only deal with the incident, but we should also think about the side-effects on the population and take charge of everything.”

Mr Tan Jin Thong, then a Probationary Station Officer with the Singapore Fire Service, was Duty Officer for the day when he heard the explosion at Macdonald House. Someone said: “It’s going to rain!”, mistaking the sound for thunder. Minutes later, the alarm at the station that was linked to Macdonald House went off. The officers rushed out with three fire engines. On arrival, Mr Tan saw how dusty the atmosphere was, cars were in awkward positions and glass was strewn on the road. Assistant Divisional Officer Leong realised it was not a fire and called out:

“Jin Thong, it’s a bomb explosion!”

The public told the Fire Brigade there were people trapped on the first floor. Mr Tan ordered his men to carry the breaching tools and rescue equipment from the vehicle and they went through the main entrance. A typewriter lever had pierced the chest of one young woman. Blood flowed out when they removed the lever. Another woman was lifted out of the rubble. Probationary Station Officer Osman extricated a man trapped by a lift door. Duty and service were uppermost in their minds.

► **GOTONG ROYONG: THE EARLIEST CIVIL DEFENCE**

Singapore Fire Brigade officers battling the Bukit Ho Swee fire. Photo: Singapore Civil Defence Force.

Aside from incidents of a man-made nature, there could be unfortunate tragedies that would disrupt public order. One that left the deepest impression on this period



PAGE 18 THE STRAITS TIMES FRIDAY, MAY 26, 1961

# KAMPONG BLAZE—AN AERIAL VIEW

The Straits Times aerial picture tells the whole story of yesterday's big fire. It shows vividly the extent of the area devastated. The blaze started near the site of the old Kampong Tiong Bahru. It ran through an alleyway and reached many houses. Many houses were destroyed. Even as houses began their regular task of fighting the flames, sparks were blown across the road.

Igniting into the air. Fanned by strong winds, the fire soon spread through the kampong right up to Baleok Street and then over to the D'Almeida Street, burning down the blocks of flats in the area.

When this picture was taken by Straits Times cameraman Lee Tuck Soon from a Royal Singapore Flying Club plane, the fire had created around the blocks a sea of smoke.

Seen in the left foreground are flats built by the government on the site of a 1958 fire to house victims.

**Picture by Lee Tuck Soon**

LEFT: The exodus from the burning kampong before it was gutted. Men are seen carrying to safety a bed and other household furniture. Fifteen minutes after this picture was taken the atop houses were seen.

LEFT BELOW: A group of victims and sight-seers watch the remains of some of the first atop houses to be sought in the blaze.

BELOW: A volunteer fire fighter gives a pick-a-side to an elderly man who lost his home.

pick the best oranges to make the best orange drinks

Photo and published by the Straits Times Press (Malaya) Ltd., 111, Raffles Road, Kuala Lumpur and Times House 200, Raffles Road, Singapore. (Managing Director: A. C. S. S. S.)

A newspaper article on the Bukit Ho Swee fire. The fire, which occurred on 25 May 1961, left several thousand people homeless and razed a squatter area at Kampong Tiong Bahru the size of some 1,001 football fields. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings



(above and right) Singapore Fire Brigade officers fighting the Bukit Ho Swee fire.  
Photos: Singapore Press Holdings

was the Bukit Ho Swee fire of 25 May 1961, the biggest post-war blaze, which raged over an area the size of some 1,001 football fields in the 13 sq km hillside squatter at Kampong Tiong Bahru. Some 2,800 attap houses were engulfed by the flames. Two oil mills, three timber yards and three major workshops were destroyed. Divisional police officers were activated from Queenstown. They were reinforced by the Reserve Unit. For these police officers who responded immediately, the major problem was to keep the crowds away from the scene. Poles were used as barriers. The police also had to counter acts of looting that went on amidst the carnage.

Mr Loh Kah Loon was a fire officer with the Singapore Fire Brigade and was in charge of one of the fire engines that was called to fight the fire. He recalled that the driver of the Fire Brigade lorry bringing spare hoses had complained to him that panic-stricken members of the public snatched all the hoses on his arrival. Mr Loh wondered if they intended to couple these hoses to the fire hydrants themselves to douse their own homes first.

One of the firemen, Mr Ali bin Bakar, found they had insufficient fire hydrants in the area and had to reuse the water which flowed from the hand-held jets into a drain. From the drain, the water was recycled and pumped up again to the jet. In the course of the prolonged firefighting operation, the firemen got dehydrated and thirsty and drank the water from the hoses. Imagine their reaction when told the water was not from the fire hydrant but from the drains. Not that they really cared in view of their desperate need. Fireman Mr Jaafar bin Sidek climbed to the top of the turntable ladder and tried to apply a hand-held jet to the raging flames but found merely a trickle of water coming out from the jet which only served to wet his uniform. Foreman Mr Jumari bin Marzuki, commander of one of the major fire engines, watched the flames jump – as if they had a life of their own. The wind was making things more difficult than they already were.

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**What a way to spend Hari Raya Haji, he thought.**

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The fire suddenly leapt to the vicinity of the turntable ladder where Mr Jaafar was still perched and in the midst of trying to use a stronger water-charged jet. To his horror, the crew below him had already jumped off the fire engine. They had to do that or be roasted alive! Mr Jaafar stayed put and doused himself repeatedly. His hand was blistered with burnt scars that show to this day. The quick-witted act of dousing himself at intervals probably saved his life that day.

The Bukit Ho Swee fire claimed four deaths, and 85 people, including firemen from 22 fire engines, were injured. Over 15,000 were left homeless. For three days after the inferno, firemen were still cooling the embers with water over and over again, to prevent reignition.

Help came from some distance away, including, for instance, the firefighting team from Kampong Puay Teng Keng on Boon Teck Road, the most populated village in the Toa Payoh area, where there were many wooden houses. That was yet another example of the *gotong royong* (Malay for “communal mutual help”) spirit in action. The *kampong* firefighting teams were managed by the community rather than the municipal authorities or the Government. Village headmen were made leaders of these firefighting volunteers. In this time when civil defence was accorded relatively lower official priority, this was an early form of community partnership, where state agencies and ordinary folk worked hand-in-hand, and also hand-on-firehose, as one might say, to learn to become equipped to deal with crisis situations.

The firefighting squads that were formed in the *kampongs* were trained and equipped by the Fire Brigade. The Brigade had been expanded gradually over the



The lookout tower, used in the 1950s, of Geylang Fire Post at Lorong 29. Photo: Singapore Civil Defence Force

preceding decades, with more fire stations built to deal with fire risks for a growing population that had crossed the one million mark in 1950, when Singapore gained the status of a City. The newly acquired equipment included a 65-foot Simon snorkel on a hydraulic platform that made its first appearance fighting a fire in a shop in Synagogue Street in 1965. The Fire Brigade had developed to become almost on par with any country in the Western world, according to a newspaper report of the time, especially in its operations in the urbanised parts of Singapore. In the countryside, however, the collaboration of the people remained just as crucial, given the much larger area that had to be covered.

The beginnings of a modern formal civil defence force emerged only later that year, when the first Vigilante Corps post was officially designated at Gulega Road in



The Yang di-Pertuan Negara of Singapore, Tun Yusof bin Ishak, inspecting the contingents of the State Vigilante Corps at Jalan Besar Stadium in 1965. About 3,000 Vigilantes took part in a giant rally and marchpast at the stadium to celebrate the first anniversary of the formation of the Corps.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

Changi. The Vigilante Corps were the de facto civil defence of a modest nature during those times, formed in May 1964 as a response to the threat of Indonesian saboteurs. Some 15,000 men responded to the Government's call for volunteers to help the police in street patrols and to counter saboteurs. The men of the Corps patrolled neighbourhoods and kept their eyes and ears open for sabotage attempts by anti-Malaysia elements. Most of them were armed with only torches and sticks. They were only empowered to make citizen's arrests, as no legal powers were vested in them. *Konfrontasi* ended in 1966, with the signing of the Jakarta Agreement.

#### ► INDEPENDENCE IN 1965: TAKING COMPLETE CHARGE

The need for greater collaboration between the police and the people became even more vital after the most monumental change in the history of modern Singapore, with the Separation from Malaysia on 9 August 1965. This time, Singapore was completely on its own as a new-born state. The Police Force that had been known previously as *Polis Negara Singapura* following self-rule in 1959, and as the Singapore component of the *Polis Di-Raja Malaysia* during the merger period, was now the *Polis Republik Singapura*, or Republic of Singapore Police. The new Government of this independent nation formed a Ministry of the Interior and Defence (MID) to coordinate security matters. Following Singapore's independence, the Singapore Special Branch (SB) also came under MID. On 17 February 1966, the SB was renamed the Internal Security Department (ISD).

The Police Training School in Thomson Road was rebuilt to cater to more than 850 new recruits – nearly thrice the previous intake. In a speech at an event at the Kong Chew Huay Kuan on 14 November 1965, then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew recalled that during the 1964 riots, he had made a trip to the Policew Headquarters but realised that the Force could not do much on its own, because the police were still under the control of the Central Government in Kuala Lumpur. After Separation, the situation was completely different, he said.

**“Now, we are in charge. But, if something is not done about our defence position, there will be trouble.”**

The immediate task was to train 10,000 citizens to defend the country. In another speech, at an event at the Coronation Road Community Centre on 19 December 1965, Mr Lee said that the riots “happened because those in charge of the police did not take action earlier. It was as simple as that. If we had given the orders, it would not have happened. But we are giving the orders now and we will ensure that such things do not happen again.”

Border control became a new area in the work scope of the security agencies. New immigration arrangements were necessary from 1 August 1966, with the Malaysian Government’s decision to terminate the existing administration arrangements for a common immigration clearance and visa for the States of Malaya and the

Republic of Singapore. Guarding Singapore’s borders was an increasingly demanding task, given its coastline of some 130 km and proximity to Malaysia and the neighbouring islands of Indonesia. Full immigration control between Malaysia and Singapore was functional by 1 July 1967. A Singapore Restricted Passport was issued that was valid only for travel to West Malaysia, and this remained in use until 1 January 1999. Speaking in Parliament in January 1968, Mr Lim Kim San, then Minister of the Interior and Defence, told his lawmaker colleagues that patrolling these lengthy borders would incur substantial public funding. Cases of illegal entry into Singapore shot up from 130 in 1959 to 2,593 in 1969. With the Republic’s growing prosperity, the lure of a better life was a constant attraction for immigrants, legal and illegal. This, however, continued to pose security challenges for the Police Force and the Immigration Department.

To boost the security and survival of the new nation, concerted effort was required from all supporting agencies. The police, in turn, played its part in helping to



Cargo clearance at Woodlands Checkpoint. Photo: Immigration & Checkpoints Authority

promote national priorities, for example, by decorating police stations with colourful lights and National Language Month slogans to promote the learning of *Bahasa Melayu*.

### ► VIGILANTE CORPS: THE COMMUNITY RESPONDS

After 1965, the Vigilante Corps played a role in nation-building as well, fostering good citizenship and civic duty. By 1966, they were operating from over 100 posts throughout the island. As Mr Wee Toon Boon, then Minister of State (Defence), said at the opening ceremony of a Vigilante Corps special training course on 14 March 1966, the Corps were “an organisation of the people” and its role “is vital because we cannot expect the police to be at all places all the time, as they are burdened with other multifarious duties”. Such a Force, he added, “is all the more effective if the people themselves organise voluntarily with assistance from the regular police”.

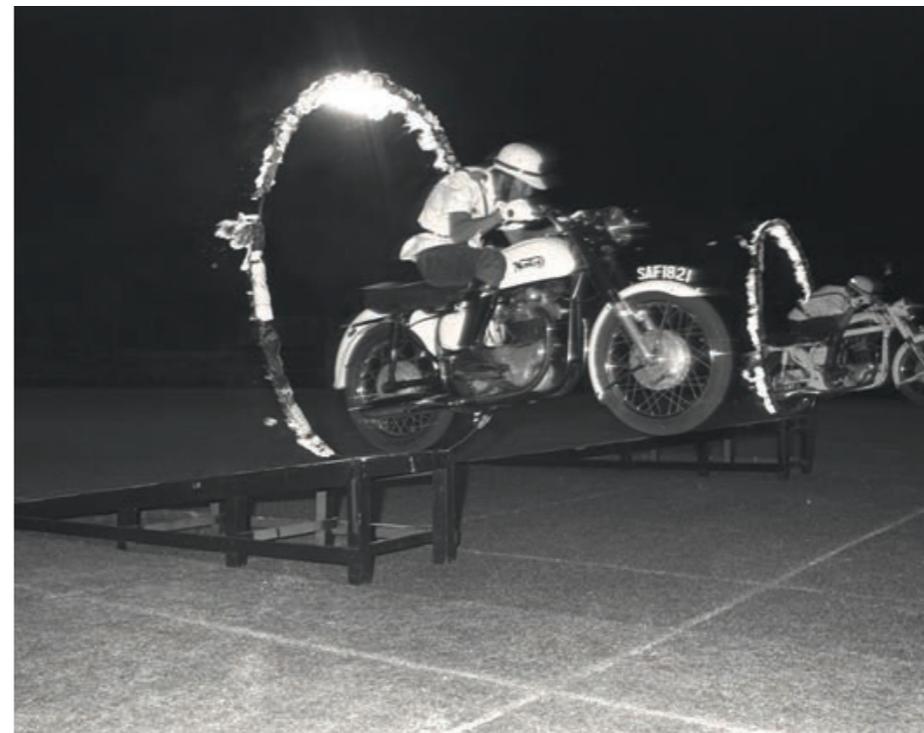


Mr Lim Kim San, then Minister of the Interior and Defence, at the Special Constabulary annual parade in 1968 at the Police Training School in Thomson. For the first time, National Servicemen were among those on parade. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

The 1967 Vigilante Corps Act empowered the Corps officially to help the police with maintaining law and order and peace, and preventing crime. A Police Superintendent was appointed Commandant of the Corps. Training included weapon handling and sea skills. The introduction of National Service in 1967 created options for part-time service in the Police Special Constabulary or Vigilante Corps. The first batch of 2,511 National Servicemen signed up when Special Constabulary registration started on 30 August 1967. Training was conducted after office hours or on weekends at the Police Training School and secondary school locations. Members of the Corps wore the same police uniform but with a red lanyard at the shoulder. By 1969, there were 10,000 part-time National Servicemen in the Corps, and by the end of 1976, nearly 40,000 members, with 800 volunteers. As Mr Lim Kim San, then Minister of the Interior and Defence, noted at a Special Constabulary National Servicemen passing out parade in 1968, the tremendous growth of the Corps demonstrated the public-spiritedness and national consciousness of the people.



Vigilante Corps passing out parade at Telok Kurau School in July 1969.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings



A performance in May 1972 by the Police Force and Vigilante Corps. They were taking part in a full-dress rehearsal for Police Week.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

### ► AUXILIARY SECURITY FORCES

Ever since those early days, the need for auxiliary security forces has been apparent and their relevance remains today. For example, the Guard and Escort Unit was formed in 1959. This was the precursor to Cisco (Commercial and Industrial Security Corporation) which exists to this day. The Unit was originally seen as a way to devolve authority to special constabulary officers who had served in the conflict between the Commonwealth Armed Forces and the Communist Party of Malaya during the Malayan Emergency period of 1948–60, but could not be absorbed into the regular Force due to their lack of suitable qualifications. The Unit had to contend with two rising crime trends – robberies of cash and valuables, and kidnapping of the rich and famous. From a small initial troop of 825 men, the Unit grew to more than 1,000 strong within two years. Even then, it fell short of demand, and those who wanted protection still had to hire bodyguards.

### ► ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION

As part of the larger effort to build up a credible Police Force, the need to start fostering interest in police work among the young – or at the very least, a deeper appreciation of its value and contribution – was already in place from the earliest days. In 1959, an experimental Police Cadet Corps was formed in Bartley Secondary School, with 30 boys and a teacher who served as training officer with the Volunteer Special Constabulary. In 1961, the passing of the Police Cadet Corps Ordinance provided for a Police Cadet Corps that was affiliated to the SPF. This aspect was to receive much more attention in later years, after the most pressing issues following the State's newfound independence had been settled.

Retired police officer Mr Omar bin Mohamed was in one of the first batches of National Police Cadet Corp (NPCC) cadets at Sang Nila Utama Secondary School between 1962 and 1965. He recalls how the cadets tapped into the knowledge and experience of the NPCC in Bartley Secondary School, a neighbouring school. He thinks he and his fellow cadets were lucky because one of the Colonels in Mount Vernon was helping out at the school. Every Saturday, the cadets were invited to Mt Vernon to learn how to handle weapons and try out guns, as the NPCC did not have such equipment at that time. The revolvers felt heavy, he recalls.

He also enjoyed camping at places such as Pulau Ubin, and learnt skills such as foot drills, shooting and how to make arrests, and also became more familiar with various laws. "I liked learning about such laws because then I would know what to avoid, and I could also advise my friends not to do this or that because it's an offence," he says.

Discipline was just one of the core values that he imbibed from serving in uniform. Indeed, he now advises the NPCC cadets of today:

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**"Apply the discipline you learn in NPCC in your studies, because you need discipline for your studies as well."**

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### ► REVIEWING THE PENAL PHILOSOPHY

At that time, the vision was already in place to initiate modernisation of the security agencies in all facets of safety and security, and these efforts were to come to fruition in subsequent decades. The seeds of this process had been sown as far back as 1948 with the first Prison Inquiry Commission to review the country's penal philosophy and administration. It continued in 1960 with the setting up of the second Prison Inquiry Commission to study the implementation of a more rehabilitative approach. And the momentum has since been sustained, although change would take time to be realised throughout the whole system. For example, in March 1964, Mr Yong Nyuk Lin, then Minister for Health, visited Outram Road Prison and was impressed with the patience and high sense of dedication of all prison officers and staff, but noted the "grim conditions" of "this unhappy institution" that was due to be demolished by the end of that year.

Just two and a half years later, on 23 September 1966, Mr Othman Wok, then Minister for Culture and Social Affairs, opened the Queenstown Remand Prison that was built at a cost of \$2 million for 300 inmates, to replace the old Outram Road Prison. In his speech, he indicated the early beginnings of what was later to become known as the Yellow Ribbon Project:

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**"In the past, the sole aim of imprisonment was punishment. The only object was to make the wrongdoer suffer. The modern trend is different. The emphasis now is on re-education and rehabilitation. The modern jail is now a school. ... I hope that I am also declaring open the hearts of the good people in our society to a new and enlightened attitude to those who pass out of the doors of our prisons."**

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In earlier years, the hands of the people of the *kampongs* were asked for, to join in the fight for security. In later years, the hearts of the community would be appealed to even more, to further secure a changing society.



The old Changi Prison was constructed by the British administration of the Straits Settlements as a civilian prison in 1936. The Prison was demolished in 2000 and its inmates relocated to a new state-of-the-art prison complex. The iconic front gate of the old prison was preserved and moved to the new prison.  
Photo: Singapore Prison Service

It is perhaps a sign of the effectiveness of the Police Force that, by 1967, the attention of the police could be turned to something as comparatively routine as launching an intensive campaign against school taxis that were operating as illegal “pirate taxis” to pick up passengers on public roads.

### ► THE JOB IS NEVER DONE

However, there was to be just one last major episode of social unrest in this decade – the last race riot in Singapore that lasted seven days from 31 May to 6 June 1969, and left four dead and 80 wounded. The disturbances had nothing to do with Singapore, and were a spillover from communal unrest in Malaysia. The police, reinforced by the Reserve Unit, worked hard to restore the peace. Areas such as Bras Basah Road were cordoned off.

SSSGT (Ret.) Evelyn Wong was at Paya Lebar Police Station when people started running into the station injured and bloodstained and shouting for a doctor. Some people had to be sent to hospital; others had to be arrested. To manage the totally chaotic situation, she and her colleagues had to work round the clock.



Mdm Evelyn Wong.  
Photo: Home Team Academy

**“We stayed in the station, showered in the station, slept in the station. We rested in the storeroom sleeping on a plank. I don’t know how we coped; we just did. Those were the days. We were worried about our own safety, of course, but in those days we were very obedient ... an order is an order, you don’t care what was happening at home, if we had to go down, we had to go down.”**

The next riot of such scale in Singapore would happen only 44 years later, with the Little India incident of 8 December 2013.

Indeed, police training helped to train SSSGT (Ret.) Wong to better handle family and working life, she says. While at Paya Lebar Police Station, she was often called on to perform undercover and decoy jobs. If there were spikes in snatch thefts, for example, she would be dispatched to loiter in the likely hot spots, adorned with jewellery, to lure the thieves. There were also operations to nab drug traffickers.

“I was quite fearful during such operations,” she recalls, but adds:

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**“If I was younger, I would not mind going back and going through it all over again. ... They trained us to become very tough. It was very good training for us.”**

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Around this time, the country’s greater social stability compared with the immediate years around Independence had enabled the Police Force to look towards internal review and self-improvement, in anticipation of the more diverse challenges that would surface in the years to come. Significantly, the year 1969 marked a milestone shift for the police in form and substance. The police uniforms were changed to the non-creasable dark blue shirts and trousers of today, a major update from the old outfit of grey flannel shirts, khaki drill shorts and leather boots. The modernisation of the Police Force was now firmly underway.

By then, the Chinese community was also well represented among the men in blue, a departure from the traditional mindset among the Chinese community to avoid careers in uniform. A change in recognition of Chinese school qualifications allowed for many more Chinese-educated officers to join the Force.

The reorganisation of the Police Force itself moved away from the narrower objective of maintaining law and order, into a body that was always investing in modern management methods and the establishment of Staff Departments, Operational Units and Specialist Departments. The Police Training School became the Singapore Police Academy in 1969, signalling a new focus on up-to-date training methods. Most

## CHANGE OF UNIFORM

(on 1st July, 1959)



A Police Constable in the old uniform



A Police Constable in the new uniform



A Woman Police Constable in the old uniform



A Woman Police Constable in the new uniform

In 1969, the Police Force assumed a new appearance and the men in blue became a familiar sight with the introduction of the police uniform that is worn today. Comprising a peak cap, dark blue shirt and trousers, black belt, blue and white corded whistle lanyard, black socks and black boots, the new uniform was both comfortable and smart, and blue was an internationally identified police colour. Photo: Singapore Police Force

importantly, a new era dawned with greater emphasis on deeper and closer rapport between the police and the public. As Dr Goh Keng Swee, then Minister of the Interior and Defence, said at Kreta Ayer Community Centre on 19 December 1966, the young men who joined the Vigilante Corps would play a key role in assisting the police for the prevention of crimes and the maintenance of social peace and order.

**“As indicated in the history of many countries all over the world, national prosperity must depend a great deal on the perseverance, unity and loyalty of the people, and not least, the initiative and stamina of youth.”**

The *kampongs* had played their part to keep Singapore safe, but the police and the people would have to pull together even more closely in the decades ahead to ensure the safety and security of Singapore.



Then Minister of the Interior and Defence, Dr Goh Keng Swee, officiated at the third anniversary of the Vigilante Corps parade and display at Jalan Besar Stadium during the mid-1960s. Dr Goh announced that the Government would set up eight district headquarters and 24 training centres for the 12,000-strong Vigilante Corps in June 1967.

Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

# IT TAKES A Village

COMMUNITY POLICING  
AND THE  
*GOTONG-ROYONG* SPIRIT

1970-1996



“ HE WALKS AROUND,  
SO HE KNOWS EVERYONE.”

TEE TUA BA  
FORMER POLICE COMMISSIONER,  
ON THE CONCEPT OF NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

**The folk wisdom** of an ancient African saying has it that “it takes a village to raise a child”. A resident of any *kampong* who has a sense of discipline, duty and community does not become that way by chance. The way he is, is the culmination of the conscious support, cooperation, encouragement and influence of his fellow villagers, not to mention the culture, nurtured over many, many generations – of honesty, mutual help and giving to others – what was called *gotong royong* in the old *kampongs*.

Similarly, to preserve peace and to organise order, it also takes a village. Inspired by this spirit, community policing in Singapore evolved in close partnership with the people in the decades after the initial years of nationhood. The nature of the *kampong* was to be transformed beyond imagination. In securing its safety, the collaboration and cohesiveness between the security agencies and the people were to be fostered more than ever.

### ► THE HOME AFFAIRS MINISTRY IS FORMED

But first, the key agencies of safety and security – the Singapore Police Force (SPF) and the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) – had to be reorganised to meet the needs of a new era. As different as war and peace, this realisation about the two halves of the portfolio of the Ministry of the Interior and Defence led to its breakup into two government agencies and the birth of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in 1970. This came with the recognition within the Civil Service that the work of the armed forces and the police were divergent in purpose – at its core, one force was primarily focused on deterring and preparing for war; the other on keeping the peace. Hence, they would be better served in their planning, operations and administration as separate organisations. With this split, the SPF and the other Home Affairs agencies were now on their own, left to chart their own future. This landmark change spurred a new era of innovation, improvement and modernisation. Once again, the importance of help from the public was emphasised. As Professor Wong Lin Ken, Minister for Home Affairs from 1970 to 1972, said in a speech at the

Special Constabulary annual parade in 1970: “The successful reduction of crime is a collective effort. The public must support the police in being more forthcoming in providing information.” This call for more information from the public reflected the simpler sense of community involvement in those days, a precursor to the much more extensive community participation that was to surface in the years to follow.

Meanwhile, in the larger backdrop of history, Singapore had established itself as an emerging nation of note. This would be the start of a period of consolidating and strengthening the economy. Crime took a battering, with effective enforcement backed by stiffer penalties such as the Arms Offences Act of 1973 that mandated hanging for crimes committed by discharging firearms. Restrictions of various kinds sought to curb anti-social actions and behaviour. Full-face motorcycle helmets were disallowed, a ban that was lifted later in 1985 when bank and other robberies fell to



In December 1974, communist agents were killed when a bomb they were carrying in their car exploded prematurely along East Coast Road. They were on their way to plant explosives at the house of a managing director of the Nanyang Manufacturing Company in support of its workers who were on strike. This has come to be known as the Katong Bomb Incident. Photo: Ministry of Home Affairs

negligible levels. Overall, the morale of the SPF was buoyed by having successfully maintained security coverage for two major international events hosted by Singapore – the 1971 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and the 1973 Southeast Asian Peninsular (SEAP) Games.

▶ OLD PROBLEMS RESURFACE

But some of the old threats were still hovering in the shadows. In 1968, the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) resumed its armed revolt, leading to a resurgence of communist militancy and subversion in the 1970s and 1980s, until the Party laid down arms in 1989. The CPM re-established assault units in the Malaysian jungles while underground groups emerged in support of the revived insurgency and directed acts of violence and subversion in Singapore. Of the underground satellite groups that emerged, the Malayan National Liberation Front (MNLF) was the most militarily active.

The MNLF looked for opportunities to unsettle Singapore's social and political harmony. Between 1970 and 1974, it was responsible for a series of arson and bomb incidents in Singapore. In 1970, for instance, a seven-year-old girl was killed by a booby-trapped communist flag bomb planted by MNLF members. In 1974, a booby trap bomb exploded on the overhead bridge in front of People's Park Complex. Fortunately, there were no casualties. That same year, communist agents on a sabotage mission were killed when bombs they were carrying went off prematurely along East Coast Road. In July 1975, a CPM cadre and members of his unit were arrested, leading to the seizure of a major weapons stash at a house in Kampong Loyang Besar. The stash included 189 hand grenades, 210 detonators, a revolver, a pistol and bullets. Further investigations led to another 109 hand grenades seized later that month.

The MNLF also provided the CPM with manpower, funds, supplies and equipment. One MNLF supporter serving his National Service was



A 1968 CPM directive on the Return to Armed Struggle reproduced by the pro-communist Barisan Sosialis on the front page of its propaganda publication, *Chern Sian Pau*. Source: Ministry of Home Affairs



caught stealing ammunition and military equipment, while another was arrested for stealing TNT explosives from her workplace at the Chartered Industries of Singapore. In June 1974, a senior cadre was despatched to Singapore to take over MNLF operations and to form an armed unit to carry out acts of violence. The senior cadre was caught with a pistol, bullets, explosives and detonators.

In the early 1970s, the economy was doing well, compared to the 1960s, and the job market was becoming tighter as more businesses set up in Singapore to serve the expanding Asian region. The police scheme of service was seen to be in need of a review, and university economics professor Lee Soo Ann was appointed to head a committee to undertake this in 1971. The recommendations of this committee in the Lee Soo Ann Report included raising the entry qualifications for junior officers, and giving them more competitive salaries and expanded job responsibilities. As part of the streamlining of the Force, a 2,000-strong new unit called the Commercial and Industrial Security Corporation (Cisco) was formed in 1972, following the disbanding of the Guard and Escort Unit. Cisco would provide security services to the growing financial sector, including managing bank guards.

In July 1975, the arrest of a CPM cadre led to the recovery of buried caches of hand grenades, detonators, firearms and ammunition. Photo: Ministry of Home Affairs

### ► THE LAJU HIJACK: MANAGING AN INTERNATIONAL CRISIS

From 1975, the manpower situation in the Police Force would never be the same again, with the introduction of full-time Police National Service. A major trigger for this move was the *Laju* hijack incident in January 1974, when two members of the Japanese Red Army and two from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine attempted unsuccessfully to sabotage four petrol storage tanks at the Shell refinery on the southern offshore island of Pulau Bukom. Charges on only three of the tanks detonated. The terrorists' common aim was to disrupt the supply of oil to United States forces based in Saigon, which were then engaged in the Vietnam War. In their bid to escape, they hijacked the passenger ferry *Laju*, taking five Singaporean crew members hostage. The Marine Police was activated and responded quickly, rushing to intercept and corral the *Laju*. Near the Eastern Anchorage, the *Laju* was surrounded by no fewer than 15 Marine Police boats, Customs launches and Singapore Maritime Command gunboats. The negotiations between the Singapore Government and the hijackers were led by then Acting Superintendent Tee Tua Ba, Officer Commanding (Marine Police) and later Commissioner of Police (1992–97). SUPT Tee spent many hours relaying the requests of both parties out at sea. Although it was exhausting, he remembers thinking that if negotiations failed and drastic actions were taken by the terrorists:

*(bottom left)* In January 1974, four armed men hijacked the ferry *Laju* and held five crew hostage after failing to bomb the Shell refinery on Pulau Bukom. They were intercepted and surrounded by Marine Police boats and gunboats. Photo: Ministry of Home Affairs

*(bottom right)* Japanese Ambassador T Uomoto uses a loudhailer to ask hijackers on board the *Laju* to release the hostages. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings



“I’m prepared to lose my life.”

Former Commissioner of Police Mr Tee Tua Ba.  
Photo: Home Team Academy



Seven days into the *Laju* hijack crisis, a group of terrorists attacked the Japanese embassy in Kuwait. They identified themselves as members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, acting in cooperation with Japan’s Red Army Organisation and the Organisation of the Sons of the Occupied Land. The group demanded that the Japanese Government publicly announce, within one hour after receipt of the message, the dispatch of a plane to Singapore to pick up the hijackers. Unless the demands were met, the second secretary of the embassy would be executed. The Japanese Government agreed to the demand.

The Singapore authorities had to prevent news of this from reaching the *Laju* hijackers. Tee Tua Ba recalls: “We blacked out reports of what was happening



Mr SR Nathan, then Director of Security and Intelligence for the Ministry of Defence (who became Singapore’s President in 1999) at a press conference after returning from Kuwait following the *Laju* ferry hijack. He headed a team of 13 Singapore officials who acted as guarantors of safe passage for the hijackers. Photo: Ministry of Home Affairs

in Kuwait in the copies of *The Straits Times* that were distributed to the hijackers. When the hijackers asked for a radio, I managed to successfully fob off their request. Otherwise, they would have gotten wind of the sensitive news from the BBC.” After a week of negotiations with the Singapore Government, the hijackers were eventually granted passage to Kuwait in return for the safe release of the hostages.

Staff Sergeant (Retired) Fareed Khan, then 44, was assigned to drive the hijackers to Paya Lebar Airport, and received a Commendation from the then Commissioner of Police Tan Teck Khim after the incident. When he first saw the team of 13 men who were going to escort the hijackers on the plane to Kuwait, he says, “I felt very proud ... I really salute them. These were the people who were willing to give their lives for their country. Anything could happen.”

During the entire episode, he was constantly thinking about his wife and three young children, worried about what would happen to them if anything was to happen to him. But at no time did it occur to him to walk out on the mission.



**“When we joined the Police Force, we had to take an oath. If I ran away, it means I was not an honest policeman. I will also be cheating my Government.”**

Mr Fareed Khan.  
Photo: Home Team Academy

Behind the scenes, many other officers also played key roles to ensure the success of the mission. Officer-in-charge Force Communications Branch Chew Keng Woo and Sergeant Chan Kian worked to set up the command post with a communications booster to establish contact with the people on board the ferry. He knew that the terrorists had planted explosives on the refinery tanks.

**“If the bomb had gone off down there, we would have been the first to be killed.”**

Mr Yahya bin Mat Som was tasked to deliver food, water and medicine to the crew of the *Laju*, using a launch, the *Renggis*. It was a humanitarian mission, but there was no telling what these terrorists were capable of. And as Mr Yahya had no idea how the negotiations were progressing, he had good reason to worry each time he took the *Renggis* out to resupply the *Laju*, but his mind was set on accomplishing his mission.

### ► THE BEGINNINGS OF HOME TEAM NATIONAL SERVICE

The *Laju* incident exposed the weakness of not having a sufficient reserve of trained officers to respond to crises. A government decision was taken to intensify security at key installations but this would require more manpower support. Hence, full-time Police National Service was set up in 1975, eight years after it started in the military. This was a natural extension of National Service, which was, by then, already successfully training and equipping a citizen military force. As then Home Affairs Minister Chua Sian Chin (who took over the portfolio in 1972) noted, Police National Servicemen were “a great asset”. By 1978, National Servicemen had already made up one-third of the total Force strength of over 11,500. As Mr Chua said in a speech at a police event in 1978:

**“In the various Police Divisions, National Servicemen have borne their full share of policing work. Without them, it would not have been possible to mount sufficient team policing patrols.”**

An anecdote from a routine police situation demonstrates the importance of National Servicemen by this time. Deputy Superintendent (NS) (Retired) Neo Son Chai, 66, who first served as a Police National Serviceman (PNSman) before becoming a regular officer from 1969 to 1981, recalls an occasion when he observed a PNSman on sentry duty who was not careful in checking visitors to a Police Division HQ. So he pulled the constable aside and questioned him.

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**“Do you know who is the most important person in this place right now?”**

**“The OC?”**

**“No.”**

**“The Commander?”**

**“No.”**

**“So who is it?”**

**“It’s you. You are more than just a sentry – you are the face of the Singapore Police Force, and you represent the rule of law in Singapore. Your job is important, and so are all our NSmen. So, do your job right, and do it for the right reason.”**

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DSP (NS) (Ret.) Neo explains his rationale: “It is the day-to-day patrols that help keep the crime rate down, more so than raids or special operations. When your officers appreciate the reason for doing what they do, you can be sure they will go all out to do their job well.”

#### ► THE TEST OF OPERATIONAL READINESS

At the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), manpower streamlining in 1994 saw the number of NSmen cut from 63,000 to 23,000. By then, the role of National Servicemen was much more enhanced, such that the term “reservists” was replaced by “operationally-ready NSmen”, to reflect the professionalism of citizen officers, which was by then well-established and recognised. Along with this change, the look of NSmen and their fellow officers in civil defence was also enhanced, when the uniform was changed from the old grey to blue in 1995.

One other major incident of the 1970s happened in October 1978, when the 35,700-tonne Greek oil tanker *ST Spyros*, which was berthed in Jurong Shipyard for general repairs, exploded and left 76 dead and 69 seriously injured. A flame caused

a rupture to a part of the engine room. Oil spillage caused a flash fire in the tank which spread to the engine room, sparking the blasts. In terms of crowd control, the worst situation was when it came to identifying the charred corpses. The police had to pull out all the stops to keep the crowd in a reasonable state of order. In terms of lives lost, this was the worst post-war disaster in Singapore.

During the incident, Mr Thambiah Letchamanan, then Acting Commander (Detachments), oversaw the rescue efforts. He set up a main communications centre so that all the departments could coordinate their rescue efforts. Such synchronisation was crucial, born of a shared commitment to teamwork.

“I was there for the entire period of the rescue efforts to make sure everything was under control, answering queries from the media and the public and, most importantly, ensuring that the people who were trapped inside the ship got home safe.”

Then Station Inspector Ong Swee Kee was at the scene of the *Spyros* incident, and was assigned to take charge of the mortuary. For the bodies which needed identification, fingerprints were an important part of the forensics process in the days before DNA technology, along with dentures, jewellery and other items.

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**“I think in total we worked with more than 70 bodies. I was there from the first day till the last day – from around 6 or 7am until very late. If there was nothing else to be recorded or sent for identification, I would discharge my officers. But if there was anything urgent at night, they would call us again.”**

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The team had to be 100 per cent positive about the identification. Sometimes for up to 10 hours, they went without meals. “We forgot about food and everything. Sometimes only when we were very thirsty, we drank a bit of water and carried on. We just tried to help as much as we could.”

Until now, he feels emotional when he recalls the case because it also involved the loss and grief of so many next-of-kin and loved ones. “You could see them crying; some were praying. The whole area felt very sad. Our tears nearly came down too.”

SSGT (Ret.) Abdul Rahim from the SCDF shared that



SSGT (Ret.) Abdul Rahim  
Photo: Singapore Civil Defence Force

**“The situation on board the broken ship was extremely chaotic and those who were trapped within were shocked and very fearful. As emergency responders, it is our duty to remain very calm and focused. We wanted to end the sufferings as quickly as we could and in the most efficient manner. I have already retired from the SCDF, but memories of the Spyros disaster will never fail to remind me of the roles of lifesavers and that is to run towards danger and to save lives without forsaking another life.”**

#### ► THE 1980S AND ANOTHER PHASE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

By the time the 1980s arrived, Singapore had enhanced its economic position even further. It had overtaken Yokohama, Japan, as the world’s second busiest port. In 1981, Changi Airport had opened, heralding Singapore’s commanding position in global aviation ever since. It was during this decade that Singaporeans got a new sense of identity – literally. A new credit-card-sized identity card (IC) – a high-tech laser engraving that was a worldwide first – was introduced in 1991, to replace the old cards that were first issued in 1966, among other reasons, to enhance their durability and security. The re-registration exercise by the National Registration Department (NRD) – today part of the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) – took three years. A home service was implemented by the Department to cater to those who were bedridden. A team even went to Pulau Ubin to re-register the islanders living there, to make sure that everyone was reached.

Mr Tan Kok Guan, who joined NRD as a Principal Assistant Registrar in 1988, was appointed to head the re-registration exercise. His team faced many challenges to meet the three-year deadline.

“Without the commitment of the staff, definitely we would not have been able to carry out this task.”

When his staff realised that they had to work seven days a week, he had to make them understand that this was a national exercise and they were needed to support it. He fought for, and managed to gain, compensation in the form of a hardship allowance for those who worked on the exercise.

During the three years, Mr Tan himself reported for work at 8am and left work only at about 11pm. He was aware that a boss should be with his staff, to show that he understands their difficulties.

**“My philosophy is that, you come here because you have the passion to serve the people. With this ‘burning fire’, you don’t feel like you want to give up. Also, you must have a love for the people. Without this love, you would take it as just a job, a routine. For this exercise, I really felt like I could do something for the people.”**

Mr Tan Kok Guan  
Photo: Home Team Academy



And for him, in a sense, the rewards are now visible everywhere: “Whenever I go to a shopping centre and see people open their wallets, and I spot an IC, I am reminded that this is one of the 2.6 million cards that I helped to produce.”

#### ► A NEW PUBLIC FACE

For the Police Force, this was also a time of new beginnings. In 1980, for added visibility, police cars became all white – as opposed to blue-and-white previously. The evolution of the Force into a more professional organisation was also becoming more apparent. Then First Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Goh Keng Swee was appointed to lead a review of MHA, which was completed in April 1981. Dr Goh

commended the Force for its efficient control of crime and preservation of law and order, and recommended paying more attention to planning and issues that affected operations, higher educational requirements for recruits, and higher training standards. There would be more public funds allocated to upgrade training and facilities and human resource development.

For the Force, the most important change was to bring the police much closer to the people, by initiating a totally new policing system. This was among the initiatives that followed from the 1980 review. In a 1981 review, a scan of the world for ideas to upgrade the Singapore Police Force concluded that the best models were to be found in the United Kingdom and Japan. A British team, led by Sir Peter Matthews, Chief Constable of Surrey, visited Singapore for three months. Improvements were recommended to training, the structure of the Force, management and deployment of foot and car patrols. Other organisational changes that followed included the setting up of a new Training Development Unit at the Police Academy. But it was the Japanese Koban model that was to transform policing in Singapore henceforth.

### ► BRINGING THE POLICE TO THE PEOPLE

In November 1981, then Home Affairs Minister Chua Sian Chin himself led a study team to Japan to examine the Koban system. Teams from both countries, led by experts including Mr Jinyo Kaneko, Director of the National Research Institute of Police Science in Japan, visited Singapore to make recommendations. The century-old Koban method from Japan was originally recommended to the Japanese by a German adviser from the Berlin Metropolitan Police. The key radical change was to have neighbourhood police posts covering small distinct areas, with the policeman as friend, helper and protector of his precinct. Japanese patrol officers were known as Mr Omawarisan (Mr Walkabout). As former Commissioner of Police Tee Tua Ba put it:

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**“He walks around, so he knows everyone.”**

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(top) Community policing requires policemen to be seen as people who can mingle easily with members of the community, understand their problems and render timely assistance. (bottom left) Community policing in action: Crime Prevention Bus. (bottom right) Community policing in action: Policemen reaching out to the community via bicycle patrols. Photos: Singapore Police Force

Modifications would, of course, have to be made to this model, to suit Singapore's physical and social conditions. Being located in the heart of communities, police officers would have to keep much closer contact with Residents' Committees, Neighbourhood Watch groups and other grassroots organisations.

What was needed was a fundamental shift to transform the organisational culture. One new challenge was the training of junior officers on the ground, who would generally not be directly supervised, and would be called upon to exercise discretion to deal with different situations. What was not wanted was the old legalistic way of policing, even if applied impartially. What was also to be avoided was the other extreme of a "service style", relying on informal action to resolve conflicts. Instead, what was desired was a balanced application of what can be called the "watchman style", with the focus on maintaining general order rather than enforcing the letter of the law, and with minor infringements dealt with mostly by advice or a warning.

On 1 June 1983, the first tranche of Neighbourhood Police Posts (NPPs) was launched in the Khe Bong constituency of the "B" Police Division in Toa Payoh on a one-year trial. Eight Posts were opened in the void decks of high-rise apartment blocks. Japanese police experts continued to visit to give advice. Specialised training started, and was actually referred to as "reorientation of attitudes". Change did not come



Launch of first NPP on 1 June 1983.  
Photo: Singapore Police Force



(above) The NPP logo is a graphic representation of a policeman with a peak cap at the centre who is flanked by two members of the public. Their arms are linked, symbolising mutual cooperation and comradeship as well as solidarity in the battle against crime.  
Photo: Singapore Police Force

(left) Under the community policing concept, policemen played multiple roles – friend, adviser, crime-buster, etc.  
Photo: Singapore Police Force

easy. In the first batches, those officers with the required "service mindset" had to be specially selected. The aim was to enable officers to project a friendly disposition and helpful intent. Instead of the old cold façade of patrol cars and truncheons, a friendly human face was now there to respond caringly and tactfully to complaints, even if these were as seemingly trivial as noise pollution from troublesome neighbours, or the odd proverbial cat stuck up a tree. The emphasis was also shifting away from law enforcement to crime prevention.

The benefits to the public also included faster reaction to calls for help than even the fast-response patrol cars could provide, as these cars had to serve a much larger area. Public surveys had shown that people wanted a closer police presence, which the NPPs would offer, while also projecting greater visibility to help deter crime. The end goal that the authorities wanted was for residents themselves to feel more comfortable reporting potential law-breakers or suspicious activity to the friendly neighbourhood cop rather than to the Police Headquarters through the "999" hotline, or make a trip to a much more officious-seeming police station. If this new paradigm could be realised, the overall effect on law and order would be truly transformative.



Police cars outside the headquarters at Pearl's Hill. The Upper and Lower Barracks of Pearl's Hill have been marked as historic sites by the National Heritage Board, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Singapore Police Force.  
Photo: Singapore Police Force

Each Post was headed by an Inspector, with a team of about 20 officers on foot and bicycle patrols. Officers also visited house to house, to advise about crime prevention measures. The increased manpower needs necessitated a huge recruitment drive, with some 500 recruits trained and appointed as constables in 1983. Reviewing the first year of operation of the Singapore-style Koban system, then Home Affairs Minister Chua Sian Chin noted in a speech in 1984

that the Toa Payoh Police Division received 50 per cent more reports from the public in the preceding year, and saw a drop in the crime rate of six per cent. By the end of 1985, there were 34 NPPs in four of the eight land divisions. The rollout of the full complement of 91 Posts was completed in 1989. With the NPPs, the Force had truly become much more involved in the community. The operating mode had shifted from being generally reactive to proactive. This organisational innovation attracted international attention, and the SPF organised annual Koban seminars with their Japanese counterparts to share experiences with forces in other countries. The seminars are still running today.

### ► A LEANER FORCE, BUT JUST AS EFFECTIVE

As the manpower pool became tighter, the tools became smarter. The organisational enhancements of the 1980s included the setting up of a Government-wide System Study Team and a Combined Operations Room. Online computer systems enabled even faster responses to process traffic violations, licensing and accident investigations more efficiently. Another hardware enhancement was the addition of the polygraph, or lie detector, machine in 1991 to the Criminal Investigation Department's (CID) array of capabilities. In a changing law enforcement landscape, in which criminals were becoming more educated and sophisticated, polygraph technology introduced

a psychological element into the interview protocol and was a vital new investigation tool for investigation officers (IOs).

Mr Dominique Ngoo, Head, Specialised Interview, at the CID, recalls a memorable case involving the use of the polygraph in 2001. Three elderly victims were believed to have been poisoned during a community event. Two victims recovered but one died, and the case was classified as homicide. The initial speculation was that the source of poisoning was the *satay* served at the event. Through painstaking investigations, however, a possible suspect was identified but he was uncooperative and had denied any involvement. With a polygraph examination, the IO solved the case and the suspect eventually pleaded guilty to homicide not amounting to murder.

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**“The *satay* seller was thus exonerated and he pasted a copy of the newspaper article on the suspect’s conviction to proclaim his innocence.”**

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As polygraph technology continues to develop, Mr Ngoo believes that, in the future, it will include new methods such as sensors to measure eye pupil dilation, skin temperature and even brain signals.

Even as technological advancements were added to boost effectiveness, the pressures on manpower remained a constant challenge. Each time technological enhancements were introduced, it was a test of the ability of officers to commit themselves to continuous learning, and to adapt to new operational demands and new equipment. The onus is always on the police to achieve its objectives while working hard to create a leaner, yet more effective, force. There have been episodes where this was felt more acutely, such as in 1986, with the manpower cut imposed across the board in government following the economic downturn of that year. With the NPPs now established as the frontline and face of the Force, the earlier idea of creating more police divisions was shelved. Instead, Toa Payoh Division was closed down to streamline operations.

All this while, the upgrading of operational capabilities was not compromised. In 1992, the Police Task Force, Police Tactical Team and Police Dog Unit were unified under a new Special Operations Command (SOC) to specialise in the handling of serious incidents such as armed robberies, hostage-taking and riots. In 1993, the

Police Tactical Team was upgraded and renamed the Special Tactics and Rescue, or STAR, Unit. This elite squad was to be highly proficient in marksmanship, close-quarters combat, rappelling, use of explosives, and heliborne and maritime assaults. Through the 1990s, police intelligence was given greater recognition. The CID's Intelligence Division, which had originally started as the Criminal Intelligence Unit in 1973, became an independent Police Intelligence Department in 1996. The Force also began to play a bigger role outside Singapore's shores. In 1989, for the first time in Singapore's history, a 21-man Police Force contingent joined the United Nations peacekeeping force in Namibia, and later another 27 officers were deployed. Other attachments included 166 officers to Cambodia in 1992 and 1993, 80 officers to East Timor in 2000, and individual officers to South Africa. In 1981, the Traffic Police was upgraded to a Department and assumed the role of testing and licensing car drivers, which was previously done by the Registry of Vehicles. In 1986, the introduction of breathalyser testing for motorists suspected of drink-driving became the bane, ever since, of many a late-night reveller driving home. That same year, the installation of surveillance cameras to catch motorists beating traffic red lights saw a drastic plunge in such incidents.

Among the other organisational changes that followed the 1980 review, part-time National Service was phased out in 1981, 14 years after its inception. The volunteer component of the special constabulary, which had helped nurture the conscript component, came into its own again as the Voluntary Special Constabulary. Graduates with good Honours degrees would now be appointed directly as Assistant Superintendents of Police instead of Inspectors. This scheme had been in place in the 1960s but was discontinued in 1970. Constables could be promoted to the rank of Corporal and Sergeant faster. Outstanding Corporals and Sergeants could rise to become Inspectors. Along with these structural adjustments, the organisational culture was also evolving. As the Force became leaner, it also became friendlier.

Moving into the 1990s, the need to become even more people-oriented remained the top priority on the agenda of the Force. As then Home Affairs Minister S Jayakumar (who took over the portfolio in 1985) said in a speech at the Police Workplan Seminar of 1991, aside from enhancing efficiency in organisation and manpower, the other top priority for the Force was to "improve even further on the rapport and cooperation which the police have established with the public".

## ► PREVENTION: ALWAYS BETTER THAN CURE

That prevention is always better than cure is central to the basic philosophy of the NPP system. This wisdom was made concrete in other ways as well during this phase. By the mid-1970s, the threat level had subsided somewhat since the acute challenges of the 1960s, for example mobilising the public to volunteer to help battle urgent societal dangers such as communism and communalism. More attention could be turned towards much longer-term aims of enhancing public awareness about safety and security. In 1977, the Police Force formed a Crime Prevention Branch within the CID to enhance its ability to profile and sustain crime prevention efforts, identify crime risks and recommend remedial measures. ASP (Ret.) George Palmer, who had studied crime prevention at the Staffordshire Constabulary in the United Kingdom, was appointed to head the branch, with three Inspectors as staff members. Crime prevention officers were also appointed in the land divisions.

The long-term aim of crime prevention was for the public to take ownership of this aspect and to take enough precautions to deny criminals the opportunity to commit crime. This was a kind of strategic policing method that was ahead of its time in its desire to engage the active cooperation of the public. In May 1970, the inaugural Crime Prevention campaign was launched at the Singapore Conference Hall, the first run of this community effort since 1958. The exhibition then moved to several community centres in the heartlands. Police officers visited more than 200 schools to give talks and the mainstream media gave prominent coverage to these novel community outreach initiatives. ASP (Ret.) George Palmer recalls how he and his team were equipped to advise the public on the crime that could happen right under their noses, inside their own homes:

**“I can go to your house, and identify the crime risk in your house. From your windows, your doors, your ceiling, your backyard ... I could, off the cuff, recommend to you what physical measures you needed to take.”**



ASP (Ret.) George Palmer  
Photo: Home Team Academy

In 1971, the Police Week was also revived after a 13-year break, with a slew of community events and activities seeking to build greater public appreciation for life as a police officer, and foster greater support for crime prevention and other police activities. For the first few years, many public education talks were given, leaflets distributed, and crime-risk surveys done to prompt building owners to tighten security at their premises. The Crime Prevention Branch was elevated later to a Division, and then a Department in 1981.

Even more public participation was to follow from those initial successes. In July 1981, a citizens committee called the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) was set up as an independent, impartial, voluntary non-profit organisation. The Council included influential representatives from the commercial, manufacturing, construction and insurance sectors, the security industry, the SPF and MHA. ASP (Ret.) Palmer, who became the first Executive Director, went out to raise funds for the Council from the business community. The Council identified and studied problems related to crime, and made recommendations for their prevention. Its measures and strategies complemented the role of the police in society's overall mission to fight crime. The end in mind was to foster a more civic-minded society, with each individual made aware of his responsibility to help fight crime, and of the reality that this effort cannot be achieved by the police alone. Coordinating committees were also formed at constituency level, for resident volunteers to make house visits to spread the word. Similar committees were established for shopping complexes and commercial establishments. A new phase of cooperation began between the various business communities and the police. A crime prevention bus toured factories and housing estates, and crime prevention exhibitions were held in public places and in schools.

Youth outreach was also quite extensive. From 1982, the NCPC awarded badges to school uniformed groups such as the Scouts, to recognise the knowledge they had gained in crime prevention. In 1986, following police recommendations to the Ministry of Education, educational materials such as a crime prevention package called "Dear Mr Policeman" were made part of the Primary Four and Secondary Two school curricula. The idea of having Boys' Clubs was introduced in 1982, organised by the police with the help of MHA and the People's Association. To stem the tide



Official opening of the Kim Seng Boys' Club in the 1980s.  
Photo: Singapore Police Force

of wayward youths turning to crime, then Commissioner of Police Goh Yong Hong came up with the idea of a police-run Boys' Club – a network of clubhouses in housing estates that offered at-risk kids a safe place to hang out with their friends, and take part in social activities and sports while under the watchful eye of a police mentor. At that time, street gangs were made up of boys from lower-income homes in the neighbourhood. The boys would join gangs of delinquents who often committed petty crimes such as shoplifting and glue sniffing. The Boys' Clubs would channel the energies of young boys into cultural, vocational and recreational activities, to develop individual discipline, team spirit and a sense of community. A sergeant and three constables, including one from the Volunteer Special Constabulary, were assigned to each club to lead its activities. Within two years, nine clubs were set up, with 7,000 members. By 1986, there were 14 clubs, with almost 9,000 members. It had become the largest non-uniformed youth movement. Activities organised included a "Police and Friends" youth programme, with pop concerts and roller disco sessions.

Then a Corporal, SSGT (Ret.) Philip Xavier was one of the first mentors. He was hand-picked by his superiors at the then "C" Division in Joo Chiat, to help run the inaugural Boys' Club in MacPherson that opened in 1982. Four policemen were

deployed to each club – a secretary, two corporals and one police constable. Working with the tagline “Let’s be friends”, SSGT (Ret.) Xavier and his colleagues would visit homes to recruit members – especially boys aged 12 to 18 who had a higher risk of being drawn into street gangs and a life of crime.

The police also worked with schools to identify at-risk students and speak to the boys and their families about the Boys’ Clubs. “We told them we were there to help them ... and explained that it’s an open-door concept. You can come in, and you can leave anytime you like.” SSGT (Ret.) Xavier often went beyond the call of duty for the boys, working past his 12-hour shifts at the club and sometimes inviting the boys to his home for meals. Over the years, many parents told him they were thankful that the Boys’ Clubs took in their sons, instilled a sense of discipline in them and set them on the right path. SSGT (Ret.) Xavier treasures his time at the Boys’ Club because he could see the difference it made to many of the boys.



**“That’s the one thing that sticks in your mind – that we, as police officers, can achieve something, that we have helped them, these former dropouts and delinquents, achieve success and start a family.”**

SSGT (Ret.) Philip Xavier  
Photo: Home Team Academy

One key aspect which drove the success of the Police Force and the other Home Team departments was the integrity of the officers, a hallmark of all serving officers from the various departments since the earliest days. For example, in 1970, Corporal Boon Sian Meng and Constable Lamni bin Sharon resisted a bribe of \$25 a week from members of a gambling syndicate if they would refrain from raiding a gambling den in a back lane near Carpenter Street. The bribe was reported to the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau and the syndicate members were jailed. The officers’ honesty holds, regardless of the circumstances. As ASP (Ret.) Mohd Ismail of the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) recalls:

**“When I was at Changi Control Post, people offered me money, and I refused. When they had no visa and they wanted to come into Singapore, they tried to offer me money to allow them in. I refused. I am very particular about corruption. In immigration everything has to be declared. You must always have integrity, and honesty in your job.”**



ASP (Ret.) Mohd Ismail  
Photo: Home Team Academy

### ► THE “VERTICAL KAMPONGS” CHIP IN

Crime prevention messages reached almost every living-room when the NCPC launched the popular *Crime Watch* programme on TV in 1986. In addition to public education on crime prevention, the episodes also re-enacted unsolved crimes to jog the memory of eye-witnesses or potentially also to prick the public’s conscience to whistle-blow. The first telecast on 30 November 1986 had a viewership of 1.3 million. It prompted 37 viewers to call in, offering information on the three unsolved murder cases featured. This enabled the police to round up five members of a secret society involved in the murder of a 19-year-old National Serviceman. By then, information from the public had grown in volume so much that in the late 1980s, an additional police hotline – 225 0000 – was launched for those who had information on ongoing cases to call. In 1988, the *Crime Beat* radio programme was started to help raise public awareness of crime trends and teach preventive measures.

Mutual contribution is the essence of successful partnership. Just as the NPPs brought the police closer to the people, the people, too, would have to step forward to chip in to the joint effort of community policing. 1979 saw the formation of Residents’ Committees – groups of volunteers who gathered to take collective responsibility for the welfare and needs of communities in the Housing Board estates. Following this, the Neighbourhood Watch scheme was started in June 1981, a joint project of the Residents’ Committees and the police. The aim was for residents to sign up to participate in looking



Straits Times report on poster from the "Together we can stop crime" Neighbourhood Watch advertisement in 1987. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

out for one another's persons and property. By the end of 1981, more than 14,000 households were taking part. A Neighbourhood Watch advertisement slogan of the 1970s said: "Together we can stop crime". Another caption suggested: "When a thief pays you a visit ... he doesn't expect your neighbours to drop in." Along with this campaign, the police offered free community services such as those in Operation Identification, where engraving services were provided for the public to engrave identifying marks on valuable items including cars, cameras and hi-fi equipment. This would discourage theft as it made it more difficult for stolen goods to be resold.

By that time, the Force had already achieved and progressed significantly in its relations with the public. But there was more work to be done to take community partnership to the next level. As then Home Affairs Minister S Jayakumar explained at the Police Workplan Seminar in 1991: "Society is never static. Our people and their expectations change. Our citizens are better-educated than before. They are more enlightened. They know their legal rights." At the same time, the community itself was evolving. With the vast majority of Singaporeans living in high-rise apartments from the 1980s onwards, some of the old *kampung* spirit, or sense of community, had been lost in a new living environment in which residents do not have to go out of their homes to take out the trash anymore, with rubbish chutes mostly within their own apartment units in the "vertical *kampungs*" of modern Singapore. Today, with online shopping and food delivery, residents might not even need to leave their homes to get groceries or food. It was hoped that the Neighbourhood Watch scheme could help bring back a bit of this *kampung* neighbourliness of days past. This remains a viable aspiration in today's even more urbanised Singapore.

► GIRDING UP FOR CIVIL DEFENCE

Civil defence was another area that benefited from the changes following the 1980 review of MHA. The major fire incident of the 1970s was an isolated disaster – the blaze at Robinson's Department Store in Raffles Place in November 1972 that killed nine people. Firemen from the Fire Brigade tried to combat the fire as best as they



Straits Times report on the massive fire that destroyed Robinson's Department Store on 21 November 1972. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings



could, but two nearby water hydrants had too low water flow, and the firemen had to pump water from the Singapore River. Fireman Jaafar bin Sidek, a Junior Section Leader who had been trapped on a turntable ladder at the Bukit Ho Swee fire of 1961, was also on duty at the Robinson's fire. Initially, his fire engine had to fight through a traffic jam to get closer to the site. He saved his colleague's life when he called out just in time before a ceiling beam crashed down onto where his friend had been standing.

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**“Firemen, like other people, can also die in a fire when it is too hot,” he recalls. “Our lives are often on the line but this is our duty.”**

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The razing of Robinson's was a wake-up call to the need for more men and hardware for the Singapore Fire Brigade. In 1976, the introduction of National Service expanded the Brigade's manpower. As for equipment and capabilities, in 1977, the Brigade's Accident Ambulance Service and the Ministry of Health's Hospitals Emergency Ambulance Service were integrated to form a unified Emergency Ambulance Service for the whole of Singapore, under the command of the Chief Fire Officer. Later, in 1996, the Paramedics Scheme would be launched and aimed at producing highly trained personnel who possess advanced lifesaving skills to handle a wide range of trauma situations and medical emergencies. The first batch of paramedics became operational in 1998. After the successful implementation of the Paramedics Scheme, the Ambulance Officers Scheme was phased out and replaced by the Emergency Ambulance Service in 2000, fully manned by a pool of well-trained and experienced Singapore Civil Defence Force paramedics.

Nine people died in the Robinson's fire which was caused by a short circuit. The fire led to the enactment of the Fire Code in 1974.  
*Photo: Singapore Press Holdings*

Further organisational changes were introduced. In 1980, the Brigade became the Singapore Fire Service (SFS) and in 1981, the Service was moved from the Ministry of Social Affairs to MHA. By the 1980s, with urbanisation and public housing having altered the entire landscape of Singapore, civil defence crises were raised to a different scale altogether. More major changes were needed.

The introduction of full-time National Service for the whole civil defence corps would change the manpower situation henceforth. Inspired by the Swiss concept of total defence, the Civil Defence Command was constituted under the Police Force on 1 September 1981 with its own distinctive uniforms. The service would be renamed the Singapore Civil Defence Force in 1983. Speaking at the National Day Rally in 1982, then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew said: “The Swiss take themselves seriously. They take their threats seriously. And because they do, the world takes them seriously and they’ve had no wars for over 200 years. And people put their money in Switzerland. That’s what we must aim to be.”

The new civil defence force was tasked to implement the National Civil Defence Plan announced by then Home Affairs Minister Chua Sian Chin. As he said in 1982:

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**“Civil defence is a vital component of our national defence. Just as in Switzerland, our Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) are made up mostly of National Servicemen who come from almost every home in Singapore. Therefore, when they have to be at the battlefield, it is essential that they be assured that their families and loved ones at home are well taken care of by an effective civil defence capability. Otherwise it could be difficult to maintain their high morale. Just as we have built up a strong SAF, we now need to build up a credible civil defence capability.”**

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The Republic’s national defence strategy to train the civilian population to help themselves and each other in times of emergency or disaster would complement the role of military defence to deter aggression from other countries.

Police facilities were used to conduct training in evacuation, firefighting, first-aid and rescue. The trainees included full-time National Servicemen from the Construction Brigade who were working at the Housing Board worksites during this



time of manpower shortage in the building industry. To train the community as well in civil defence skills, Civil Defence Coordinating Committees made up of residents were set up in each constituency. Thousands of housewives took part in firefighting demonstrations to familiarise themselves with the use of such equipment in times of crisis. In September 1983, the first Civil Defence Week was held, with an open house and public exhibition at the Nee Soon Civil Defence Camp. With the formalisation of Singapore’s Total Defence concept in 1984, Residents’ Committees took the lead in running heartland programmes that trained the community in civil defence skills including firefighting, first aid administration and facilitating evacuation. In May 1984, the first public civil defence exercise, codenamed Exercise Community Spirit I, was conducted at New Upper Changi Road. Civil defence volunteers and residents were joined by representatives from agencies including the SFS, SPF, Public Utilities Board, Red Cross and St John’s Ambulance Brigade. In September 1984, the first civil defence demonstration was held in a factory, Smith & Corona, to mark the beginning of the Civil Defence Work Place Unit programme to promote awareness among people working in the private sector.

Engaging the community was all the more crucial as Singapore developed into a modern city. It was unlike the Second World War, when the people could flee to rural areas in times of major conflicts. In a much more urbanised Singapore, there

(above left) SCDF 1980s Ambulance Officers posing with a Singapore Fire Service ambulance.

(above centre) Rescuers from the Singapore Civil Defence Force participating in the first public exercise, codenamed Exercise Community Spirit I, at Block 32, New Upper Changi Road in 1984.

(top) Members of the Rescue Squad of the Singapore Civil Defence Force holding on to a jumping sheet to break the fall of a fellow fireman.

Photos: Singapore Civil Defence Force



was now no place to hide. The whole country would have to be involved in dealing with a crisis. Civilians with specialised skills need to be channelled to man essential areas of city infrastructure such as electrical and water supply engineering. Private owners had to be alerted to allow urgently needed specialised equipment such as electric generators and bulldozers to be mobilised for emergency use. Fuel would have to be conserved in bulk storage and distributed in a controlled way. Public transportation must still run as normally as possible. Civil defence could only be effective with the active support and participation of the civilian population, right down to each estate precinct, block and Residents' Committee. Taking ownership of the community responsibility for civil defence, in turn, helps enhance the social fabric and resilience of heartland neighbourhoods.

#### ► DEALING WITH URBAN DISASTERS

One could say that this enhancement of civil defence awareness and capabilities was timely, as the first real test for civil defence was to arrive not long after. On 15 March 1986, the Lian Yak building (more commonly known as the Hotel New World), a six-storey building along Serangoon Road, collapsed because of faulty construction, leaving 33 people dead and 17 survivors

The collapse of Lian Yak building, more commonly known as Hotel New World, on 15 March 1986 was among the worst disasters in post-war Singapore. Seventeen survivors were rescued during rescue operations that lasted four days. The catastrophe left 33 dead.  
*Photo: Singapore Press Holdings*





Formed in 1990, the Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team is tasked to accomplish the most difficult rescue operations. DART's core duties include high-rise and cliff rappelling, heliborne rescues, tunneling operations and other high-risk missions. Photo: Singapore Civil Defence Force

**“It was definitely a dangerous operation and thus, I asked for only two men to conduct the operation with me. Soon after, as I ventured forth, I realised that the entire team had tagged along.”**

### ► DOUSING THE DRUG MENACE

Crimes such as theft and robbery, associated with the basic necessities of human life, were essentially dealt with in the earlier years of the 1960s. But then, a more self-harming offence involving a needless luxury surfaced – drug abuse. In a way, this was a modern incarnation of an old menace – opium addiction – dating back to the earliest days of colonial life under the British. The scourge grew so heinous that in 1971, the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) was formed. The first CNB officers were seconded from the Narcotics Branch of the Criminal Investigation Department, which had been focusing on drug-related crime for two decades. A few officers were seconded from the Customs and Excise Department (CED). One of them, John Hanam, became CNB's first Director.

SSI (Ret.) Lee Cheng Kiat was seconded to CNB from CED just a few months after CNB was formed. He remembers that the Enforcement Division was the first to be set up. All who joined then were officially CNB enforcement officers. Being a small unit consisting of only about 18 people, he recalls: “We had to do everything ourselves – gather intelligence, gather information, make arrests. We didn't have much equipment and vehicles. We almost started from scratch. There was no air-con, just fans. No nice chairs, all wooden chairs.”

SSI (Ret.) Lee recalls that the most exciting moments of his career were during those early years. “When we just started, we didn't know what to expect.” One of the greatest challenges he faced was the long hours at work.

**“The personal sacrifice is that you spend less time with your family because you spend long hours at your work.”**



SSI (Ret.) Lee Cheng Kiat.  
Photo: Home Team Academy

As for the rewards, they were the greatest after busting big cases: “The feeling is satisfying. When you know you have taken drugs off the street, that is most satisfying.”

Narcotics officers had to enter into the world of nightlife entertainment and build relations with the owners of these establishments. Discotheques and other nightspots that were found to be venues for peddling drugs were closed down. Since the mid-1970s, heroin had been Singapore’s number one drug problem. By 1977, the CNB had arrested over 7,000 heroin addicts. In the mid-1980s, “party drugs” such as Ecstasy emerged on the scene, and Bureau officers conducted frequent raids on entertainment places, with a high of 661 arrests in 1996, after Operation Pandora to wipe out Ecstasy abuse. More than 20 drug trafficking syndicates were crippled each year in the 1990s. In all these successful drug busts, the crucial factors were intelligence-gathering and the responsiveness to cover every corner of the island – literally. SSI (Ret.) Lee Cheng Kiat recalls: “I liked the field work. Rain or shine, every day was never the same. One day, it could be a ship search, another day, a car search. I ended up becoming familiar with practically every part of Singapore.”

Empowerment came with legislative backing. The 1973 Misuse of Drugs Act provided for jail and caning for drug traffickers. In 1975, after a continuing rise in cases involving heroin, the death sentence for trafficking was introduced, and continues to attract controversy now and then. Concerted effort by the narcotics officers, driven by a deep desire to do good for society, produced results in a short time. Operation Ferret in April 1977, conducted jointly by the CNB and the Police Force, involved a thorough sweep of drug peddlers and pushers. SSSGT (Ret.) Kandasamy Renganathan recalls how ingenious the drug smugglers were: “In one case, we had to look inside an oil tanker to find the drugs hidden there. The tank was half-filled with oil, and anyone inspecting would just see oil!”

Within six months, some 5,000 people were arrested for possession and consumption of drugs. Between April 1977 and February 1978, there were 26,376 arrests for suspicion of drug consumption. Of these, 7,348 persons with urine specimens that tested positive were sent to the Drug Rehabilitation Centres (DRCs) for treatment and rehabilitation. Before Operation Ferret, only a small number of abusers were sent to the DRCs. In many ways, this was the first “Home Team



(top) Singapore Immigration at Tanjong Pagar Railway Station.

(bottom) Woodlands Bus Hall.

Photos: Immigration & Checkpoints Authority

operation”, although the term would be formalised only in the mid-1980s. The operation involved the Police, CNB, Prisons, CED and the Department of Scientific Services, now known as the Centre for Forensic Science, which handled urine testing. Former Commissioner of Police Tee Tua Ba observes: “After Operation Ferret, it became easier to conduct joint operations.”

### ► ENLISTING OUR FURRY FRIENDS

Meanwhile, Project Skunk, working in tandem, used dogs to detect concealed drugs at customs entry points at Changi Airport, Tanjong Pagar Railway Station and the Woodlands Checkpoint at the Causeway from Malaysia. Except for the years 1980 to 1987, when the CED took care of narcotics dogs at checkpoints, it was the Police Dog Unit, with their reliable German Shepherds, that played this key role in preventing drugs from being smuggled into Singapore. The efforts to choke supply, while working hard to stamp out demand, were bearing fruit.

Mr Veerasamy s/o Rengasamy was attached to the Customs Dog Unit from 1978 to 1987, and enjoyed his stint very much. “My best place to serve in was in the Dog Unit.” He recalls that, when trained dogs were brought in from the United States, the Customs Dog Unit did not even have a place to house the dogs. At that time, the Unit was lacking in expertise. So the Unit joined forces with the Police Dog Unit and the Army Dog Unit and used Mowbray Camp in Choa Chu Kang for training.

Dog handlers like Mr Veerasamy had to know and look after their dogs very well, including taking them swimming at the beach for exercise.



**“You have to learn the dog’s character. Dogs will also know your character. You have to be very patient with the dogs, especially during training.”**

Mr Veerasamy s/o Rengasamy  
Photo: Home Team Academy

He fondly remembers his first dog, a big locally bred German Shepherd named King, with whom he had several interesting experiences. Once, at the Parcel Post Office, King reacted to one parcel that was in transit to Indonesia. The information was relayed to the Indonesian Government, whose officials checked the parcel and found one kg of *ganja*.

In the 1990s, CNB grew in strength, taking on preventive drug education as a main function and receiving a big boost in manpower in 1995. Operation Monopoly in 1992 marked a different, more holistic approach to crippling drug syndicates as a whole organisation, from top to bottom. One syndicate leader, Ng Chye Meng alias Roger, was a compulsive gambler who was nabbed in the 14-hour operation, along with key syndicate members, distributors and known clients. In all, Operation Monopoly resulted in 29 Singaporeans and five Malaysians arrested, and eight kg of heroin seized. It effectively cut a pipeline providing a third of the heroin supply to Singapore. The break-up of the syndicate could not have been timelier, as CNB had received intelligence that the syndicate was looking to expand into the international drug smuggling arena. SSGT Gary Chua recalls:

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**“It was the first time such a big operation was mounted by CNB involving nearly all its officers. ... The emphasis was on secrecy and speed of execution.”**

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While Singapore’s borders were being checked for contraband substances as never before, once again, there was no losing sight of what was at the core of the issue – that the best efforts must always focus on the domestic front as well. Building on the realisation that the community needed to be much more involved in the war against drug abuse, a citizens committee called the National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA) was set up in 1994 to engage the public much more extensively. For this initiative, then Home Affairs Minister Wong Kan Seng was inspired by ideas from an annual report of the Hong Kong Council Against Narcotics, a private sector organisation chaired by a university professor. Another inspiration was Partnership for a Drug-free America, a programme in the United States in which citizens come up with innovative ideas to educate the public on drug abuse. Applying these ideas



Then Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Wong Kan Seng, at the opening of the Changi Women's Prison on 23 April 1994. Photo: Singapore Prison Service

to Singapore, preventive education was also extended to cover the most vulnerable group – high-risk youths who were mostly primary school dropouts. To mobilise collaboration by the schools, a seminar was held to win over school principals, who were initially hesitant, as they were unaware of the real extent of risk to their students. To engage young people, youth camps and concerts to promote a drug-free lifestyle were organised. Anti Drug Day events featured celebrities such as Hong Kong singer Andy Lau. Filmmaker Eric Khoo was commissioned to make anti-drug movies to be shown to teachers and students. The number of new drug abusers fell from a high of 1,421 in 1996 to 911 in 2002.

### ► REHABILITATION, NOT REMAND

In dealing with offenders, Singapore's basic approach from the early years has always been to help them, wherever possible, to recover and return to normal life. As then Home Affairs Minister Chua Sian Chin said at a Prisons event in 1981:

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**“The Prison Department’s most important contribution is the rehabilitation of prisoners so that when they are released, they will not return to crime. This is the crucial test of success of any penal institution.”**

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But even without the benefit of this philosophy, there would have been mounting pressure from the system itself to review the approach towards offenders. And the numbers were startling. In 1970, the prison population was between 4,000 and 5,000. By 1977, the number of addicts arrested had ballooned to 13,000. Operation Ferret, the crackdown on trafficking, had almost doubled the number of inmates. The system could barely cope, as some facilities were not geared for such demands. For example, at Telok Paku DRC, the fence was just four feet high, and several prisoners escaped while prison officers were putting up taller fences of up to 12 feet. The inmates later surrendered or were eventually caught.

In 1974, a Prisons Rehabilitation Committee was set up, led by then Permanent Secretary (Home Affairs) Tay Seow Huah, to review the system of rehabilitation, industrial training and work discipline. The chief concern was to find ways to prevent or reduce the incidence of repeat offenders. The importance of productive work to help prisoners to readjust to society was recognised, leading to the reorganisation of prison industries into a statutory board. On 1 April 1976, the Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE) was formed to provide vocational training courses to help inmates find employment after their release in areas such as electrical wiring, motor vehicle repair and printing. SCORE operated laundry, bakery, printing, metal fabrication and tailoring services. In 1987, the treatment of drug abuse was changed, seeing it as a social and behavioural problem rather than a medical one.

A Specialised Counselling Branch was set up in 1988, to liaise with other aftercare agencies and monitor ex-offenders' progress after release. A Community Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex-offenders (CARE) network was set up to provide former inmates with jobs and small business opportunities. This was made possible by bringing together all the aftercare agencies, including the Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association, Singapore Aftercare Association, National Council of Social Service and Industrial and Services Cooperative Society.

Once again, as in dealing with drug abusers, the preferred option was not just to prosecute, but to prevent; not just to remand, but to rehabilitate. With the involvement of so many more social sector organisations amidst an enhanced environment of greater awareness of the importance of the people's participation, this was like *gotong royong* all over again, like in the old *kampung* days, but in a different context and milieu. This community approach contained much scope for further development and deepening in the years to follow.

Overview of Jalan Awan Prison Block 3. Formerly a Drug Rehabilitation Centre, the now defunct Jalan Awan Prison was moved to the new Changi Prison Complex in 2004.

Photo: Singapore Prison Service



(top) Selarang Park Drug Rehabilitation Centre.

(bottom) Sembawang Drug Rehabilitation Centre.

Photos: Singapore Prison Service

03

# Security Begins At Home

DIVERSE THREATS,  
NEW CAPABILITIES  
FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

since 1997



“TODAY, SINGAPOREANS ARE ABLE TO GO ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES, RAISE A FAMILY, CARRY ON THEIR BUSINESS – FREELY, FREE FROM THE CONSTANT WORRY FOR THEIR SAFETY AND SECURITY. THIS IS A MISSION THAT HOME TEAM OFFICERS CONTINUE TO UPHOLD, TO THIS DAY, EVERY DAY.”

TEO CHEE HEAN  
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND COORDINATING  
MINISTER FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

Photo: Singapore Civil Defence Force

**The last years** of the 20th century and the dawn of a new millennium brought fresh dangers to the harmony that Singapore had fostered so well for so long. Globalisation and the internet are the main, irreversible forces of potential disruption and have changed the way people communicate and interact. In this new landscape, an open society like Singapore, with high mobile and internet penetration rates, could easily be unsettled just by someone sitting at a desk and causing havoc through his computer or smartphone. The security agencies had to respond to these new circumstances by changing the way they operated. The most significant change that emerged was the introduction and implementation of the Home Team concept.

#### ► WORKING AS A TEAM LIKE NEVER BEFORE

The key idea behind the Home Team is that the sum should be greater than its parts. At the time, between 1996 and 1997, when the idea was being formulated and tested internally, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had about 16,000 staff in eight departments – the Singapore Police Force (SPF), Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), Singapore Prison Service (SPS), National Registration Department (NRD), Singapore Immigration, Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), Internal Security Department (ISD) and the Ministry Headquarters (MHQ). These departments were joined later by the Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE), the Home Team Academy (HTA) (established in 2006), and the Casino Regulatory Authority (CRA) (established in 2008), the last formed to ensure that casino operations are relatively crime-free after the opening of the two integrated resorts.

To bring everyone together to work in a much more collaborative way would require some feat of transforming organisational culture. There were many factors to consider and address, including the obvious disparity between much more established organisations such as the SPF, which can trace its organisational heritage back to the founding of Singapore by Sir Stamford Raffles, and the CNB, with its much shorter history, smaller size and highly focused area of responsibility. In terms of collective identity, the Home Team was starting from a relatively low base. As then Permanent

Secretary (Home Affairs) Peter Chan noted: “Many rank-and-file officers don’t even know that they belong to the Ministry of Home Affairs.”

To try to overcome the natural human tendency to think, behave and work in silos is a high-order challenge, as anyone who has ever worked in change management would know. A whole new mindset was called for. As then Home Affairs Minister Wong Kan Seng put it at the Home Team Launching Workshop in February 1997:

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**“The Home Team is a completely different way of thinking, operating, managing and learning for the MHA Group.”**

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#### ► HONOUR AND UNITY

At the heart of the new sense of common mission were the key organisational core values of Honour and Unity. These values are still reinforced on a daily basis – Honour being wrapped up with related ideas of patriotism and duty, and Unity drawing from Singapore’s exceptionally strong norms of social cohesion. Loyalty would be fostered on two levels – mainly to the unit and also to the Home Team. As it happened, the national backdrop in 1997 had a convergent major idea that had been promoted around the period of general election in January that year. The ruling party’s national vision was to call on all Singaporeans to help “make Singapore our best home”. Applying this to the Home Team, Mr Wong called on Home Team officers to work towards “a level of security and safety that is unrivalled anywhere else”, “where people have a strong sense of service and fulfilment in serving the community”.

The Home Team concept was the fruit of a year of extensive dialogue and soul-searching by the Ministry’s staff. The change process had started in 1996, to work towards building consensus by letting staff from different departments work together as a team in real-life situations. Some 250 officers came together on projects, over the whole year, in the main areas of joint operations, operational master planning and talent management. Among the innovations was the formation of the Joint



Home Team logo  
Photo: Ministry of Home Affairs

New Phoenix Park HQ and  
Police HQ at 28, Irrawaddy Road.  
*Photo: Ministry of Home Affairs*



Operations Staff Group, an inter-agency body looking into enhancing quality service to the people, especially in terms of improved convenience to the public (now seen as “customers”) and more seamless service across departments. There was a new desire to benchmark Home Team service levels to world-class standards, ranging from the speed of ambulance response to efficiency in issuing identity cards.

### ► AN ADAPTIVE LEARNING ORGANISATION

In the process of forging a new organisational culture for the Home Team, one of the main conceptual models that was applied was the learning organisation theory of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology systems science professor Peter Senge. A learning organisation is one that invests in facilitating the learning of its members and continuously seeks to transform itself. One application of this approach was in revamping post-mortem meetings after major incidents. These meetings were sometimes dreaded for reasons such as the fear of blame being assigned. With the new approach, these sessions became “after-action reviews”, avoiding the assigning of blame at this forum and instead emphasising a spirit of learning, discovering as a team what did not go so well and how to adjust to similar situations in future, and on building up fruitful working relationships among officers. It is this spirit of focusing on continuous improvement that was to drive the future enhancements of the entire Home Team. This was the starting point, in a very real sense, of the general outcome of safety and security that the nation has continued to enjoy.

The Home Team’s response to the information revolution was to seize the opportunities offered, by developing thinking officers who were empowered and equipped to deploy state-of-the-art technology using far more information than ever before. To facilitate this, MHA set up a Technology Division in 1996. In 2000, the Home Team Sectors concept was introduced to deepen collaboration among Home Team departments on a geographical basis. The country was divided into five regions – the Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western and Maritime Sectors. This meant that different units could be better organised to respond to needs on the ground across disciplines. Critical resources, such as Neighbourhood Police Centres (NPCs) and fire stations,

were pooled – for example, through the co-location of infrastructure for NPCs and fire stations. This approach was further developed in 2004 with Operations Terrain Mapping, a more advanced system to share ground intelligence, operational data and knowledge, to tackle crime and terrorism. Common datasets, templates, processes and shared info-communications systems were set up. In all this, technology was a tool. The key was still personal relationships, which became even more crucial than before – not only among officers who had to collaborate with colleagues from another department in new ways, but also with Home Team officers building contacts with key individuals in local institutions, such as places of worship and grassroots organisations. Community partnerships were becoming more enabled by technology.

### ► ENHANCING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS EVEN MORE

It is these personal relationships that continue to make the Home Team vision a living idea. In Mr Wong’s words:



Community Policing System (COPS) officers at work in the community. Photo: Singapore Police Force

**“We work together with the community, and through the community, to realise our goals.”**

For the Police Force, nowhere was this more apparent than in the revamp of the Neighbourhood Police Post (NPP) network in 1996. A reorganisation was necessary in the light of factors such as the scarcity of manpower and rising public and staff expectations. To identify what adjustments would be good for the future of community policing, the review surfaced some strengths and weaknesses of the existing system. While the NPP system, with its foot and bicycle patrols, was excellent at building community relations, it was observed that it did not provide enough opportunities for officers to build wider-ranging competencies such as investigation and forensic skills, and take on larger responsibilities.

The outcome of the review was a move to a new “round-the-clock” one-stop service concept centred on a new entity called the Neighbourhood Police

(left and right) COPS officers at work. Photos: Singapore Police Force



Centre (NPC). These NPCs would be more centralised within residential districts, and cover areas that previously would have been served by a few Police Posts. As the geographical span of each NPC was wider compared to each NPP, they were a bit further away from some of the homes. However, they would provide to the public a wider range of policing services, and these could be just as responsive, in areas including investigations, community relations and neighbourhood patrols. Each NPC would have a critical mass of about 80 officers. In October 1997, the first NPC, Queenstown NPC, was launched, and there are now 35 NPCs across the island. Because of the NPCs’ larger area of coverage, one impact on officers has been the exposure to a wider range of ground experiences. As ASP Justin Ong recalls of his time as Deputy Team Leader of Geylang Neighbourhood Police Centre:

**“It was all in a day’s work to chase robbers, break up fights and arrest illegal punters. All these happened within the same shift, which made the work extremely interesting as I never knew what to expect from the next call for help.”**

Meanwhile, community collaboration became even closer and more extensive. In an effort to mobilise individuals and community groups to work more closely with the police, the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) continued to build on its role as a community catalyst. To add more value to the fight against crime, the NCPC has updated programmes and strategies to help address the evolving criminal landscape – for instance, to focus on aspects such as security in hotels, commercial premises, construction sites and housing, and also on children, youth and the elderly. For example, in his message in 2015, the Council’s Chairman, Mr Tan Kian Hoon, observed that between 2013 and 2014, e-commerce crimes jumped more than 225 per cent to 1,659 cases. “As technology advances and crimes rapidly shift online, NCPC has to conscientiously review and update its programmes and strategies to reduce the risk of crimes occurring,” he said.



**“As a charity, we owe our success to the unwavering support from the community, our stakeholders and sponsors.”**

Mr Tan Kian Hoon, Chairman  
of the NCPC from 2002 till the present.  
*Photo: National Crime Prevention Council*

For example, to reach out more to the community, the Council organises several programmes, including its signature programme, the Delta League, which engages thousands of youths through football, to educate them on crime prevention and social responsibility. To enhance crime prevention, the NCPC rolls out public awareness campaigns on mainstream and social media, focusing on self-help to guard against a range of crimes, from housebreaking and loan sharks to outrage of modesty and online scams.

With the advent of the internet, crime-busting went virtual, as criminals became more web-savvy. In 1997 the SPF set up the Computer Crime Branch, and in 1999 a Computer Forensics Branch was established within the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). Theft of intellectual property was another “sunrise industry” for both virtual and non-virtual criminals. An Intellectual Property Branch focused on dealing with the growing number of piracy syndicates. At the same time, white-collar crime was also on the rise. In January 2000, the Commercial Affairs Department of the Ministry of Finance and CID’s Commercial Crimes Division were reconstituted as the Commercial Affairs Department within the SPF. This would allow SPF to better respond to the changes in the online community it had to police as well.

To work with the community on another important aspect of traffic and road safety, the Singapore Road Safety Council (SRSC) was set up as a non-profit organisation by MHA in December 2009, with the support of the Ministry of Transport, Land Transport Authority and other road safety-related stakeholders. The Council’s main focus is on public education for accident prevention, especially to reduce dangerous road-use behaviours such as drink-driving, and for the wellbeing of more vulnerable road-users such as motorcyclists and cyclists, as well as pedestrians such as young children and the frail elderly.



Delta League youths in a football game.  
*Photos: National Crime Prevention Council*

The Council has had to adapt its work to the changing nature of the population and of road usage, and it will continue to have to adjust its messaging and outreach strategies. For example, statistics show a steady decline in traffic accidents overall, with 154 fatal accidents (or 2.82 cases per 100,000 population) in 2014, the lowest recorded so far. However, between 2013 and 2014, six per cent more motorcyclists and pillion riders were injured, and elderly pedestrian fatalities also increased by more than 47 per cent – hence the need for even more community collaboration and targeted messaging to address the vulnerable groups. As the Council's Chairman, Mr Bernard Tay, said:

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**“Road safety is a shared responsibility. It depends on the behaviour and attitude of every road-user.”**

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#### ► REVAMPING RESCUE OPERATIONS AND READINESS

In the SCDF, new levels of capability and effectiveness were also reached. This is especially evident in the way SCDF NS officers are being deployed. In 1998, the first cohort of trained full-time National Service firefighters was deployed to fire stations. They have since become integral to the fire stations' response forces. The manpower pool for the SCDF Operationally Ready National Servicemen (ORNSmen) was trimmed from 23,000 to 10,000, creating leaner units. In 2002, the SCDF became the first department in the Home Team to introduce an open mobilisation exercise for its ORNSmen. Today, SCDF ORNS officers and men are equipped with an increasingly wider range of skills, including handling hazardous materials (HazMat) and other unconventional threats.

Since April 2015, the SCDF has enhanced its ORNS deployment in fire stations. The purpose of the enhancement is to improve the integration of ORNSmen with their parent fire stations and to allow them more opportunities for peacetime operational response. With this enhancement, annually, ORNSmen from each fire station will undergo a three-day refresher training at the National Service Institute

and thereafter be attached to the fire station for about two weeks to attend to peacetime emergencies such as fire, rescue and medical incidents. This ensures that at any one time, a section of ORNSmen will be deployed at a fire station throughout the year.

The SCDF ORNS Rescue Battalions are trained to conduct major or prolonged rescue operations. This ranges from basic firefighting, urban search and rescue operations, to medical triage and casualty evacuation.

The SCDF also continued to hone its capacity to deal with crisis situations. In 2008, the SCDF's elite squad, the Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (DART), became the first in the Asia Pacific region to be classified by the United Nations as a Heavy Urban Search and Rescue Team. DART, which was formed after 1990, has played a vital role in responding to major incidents, such as the 2004 Nicoll Highway Incident, where steel structures supporting the tunneling of a subway line beneath the highway gave way, resulting in a massive cave-in. For the officers who responded, it was a complex search and rescue operation over five days, amidst periods of heavy downpour and dangerous soil conditions that threatened the safety of the rescuers. The DART officers displayed courage, dedication and devotion to duty, having to work in murky chest-high waters, among unstable sharp exposed metal and concrete structures and in near-zero visibility. WO II Mohamed Tashirin recalls:

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**“We were all bewildered by the extent of damage; it exceeded our farthest imagination. In my mind at that juncture, the top priority was to find life, not to fear for mine.”**

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For these officers, their tasks have been facilitated by the Force's continued investment in hardware such as the Special Rescue Tender, a vehicle introduced in 1997, which carries a wider range of rescue equipment for rapid first response to incidents. Some of the new tools, such as fibre-optic scopes and life detector systems, were also used in overseas missions including the Sichuan earthquake in China in May 2008, which left 70,000 dead and 18,000 missing. SSGT Syed Faizzal recalls the human bonds that were forged in that particular mission:



(far left and left) The massive cave-in of a section of the Nicoll Highway on 20 April 2004 left four dead and three injured. SCDF officers engaged in a complex search and rescue operation over five days.

(top middle) SCDF deployed sniffer dogs to help with the search and rescue efforts.

(top) SCDF officers helping a badly injured driver after he was extricated from his wrecked car.

**“The contingent was able to help the locals locate the bodies of their loved ones ... no longer are we separated by national divide. We are friends next door.”**

(left) Personnel from the SCDF Hazmat Emergency Assessment Response Team in their Hazmat suits.

(right) The SCDF launched the Light Fire Attack Vehicle – the Red Rhino – in 2014. The SCDF 4th Generation Light Fire Attack Vehicle (commonly known as LF4G) is equipped with a Compressed Air Foam pump system, the first of its kind in the world for a compact firefighting vehicle.

Photos: Singapore Civil Defence Force

Another advanced vehicle, the Red Rhino, was conceptualised by the SCDF and manufactured in Singapore in 2000 to overcome obstacles posed by narrow streets, tight corners and traffic congestion, as it is smaller than the traditional fire engine. Also known as the Light Fire Attack Vehicle (LFAV), the Red Rhino could manoeuvre into every corner of a Housing and Development Board (HDB) block void deck. It was equipped with a hydraulic system for rescue tools, a water mist gun and a water monitor. Since then, the SCDF has developed a few generations of the Red Rhino as part of its constant quest to improve its anchor fleet of frontline vehicles. The 4th generation LFAV is the first compact urban firefighting vehicle in the world to feature an integrated compressed foam system. This makes the vehicle more effective, as compressed foam extinguishes fire four times faster than water. A further improved version of the Red Rhino, the 5th generation LFAV, was unveiled in November 2015. It is the SCDF's first dual-purpose frontline vehicle that is uniquely designed and equipped for response to both fire-rescue and medical emergencies.



In addition, the SCDF also acquired the Unmanned Firefighting Machine (UFM), a versatile firefighting unit built to operate under extreme conditions as well as complex and hazardous environments. It can be deployed for a variety of firefighting operations such as for the ventilation of a smoke-logged area using high velocity airflow, and firefighting using intense water mist, jet or foam. It is designed to easily tap water directly from the hydrant or even open sources such as reservoirs and swimming pools. It also relieves heavy manpower commitment in major operations while producing a far superior firefighting capability to quickly extinguish flames.

Another vehicle of the SCDF is the Hazmat Control Vehicle (HCV). The HCV will be deployed by the SCDF Hazmat Emergency Assessment Response Team during a Hazardous Materials (HazMat) incident for the identification of hazardous substances, assessment of the extent of contamination and to determine the mitigation approach for the incident. This latest HazMat vehicle integrates three new components, namely,

The SCDF Unmanned Firefighting Machine (UFM) in its first deployment at a warehouse fire in Tuas Avenue 11. The UFM is a remote-controlled firefighting unit built to operate in extreme heat and hazardous environments and discharges water or foam to put out fires. Equipped with a rail kit, it can also be manoeuvred in an MRT tunnel to put out fires and conduct ventilation operations.  
Photo: Singapore Civil Defence Force

advanced detection and analytical equipment; Command, Control and Communication infrastructure; and Vehicle-in-Vehicle concept to incorporate mobile transporters for rapid detection and monitoring of HazMat substances during incidents.

### ► TECHNOLOGY AND TEAMWORK: THE NEW “TAG TEAM”

Technology and teamwork – the new “tag team” of key factors for operational effectiveness – would continue to be systematically enhanced in the years to follow. The merger in April 1998 of the Singapore Immigration and the National Registration Departments to form Singapore Immigration & Registration (SIR) was not just a change in name. Five years later, with the need to strengthen border controls heightened after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, SIR and the checkpoint control function of another colonial era agency, the Customs & Excise Department, were merged in 2003, to form the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) as it is known today. The sudden outbreak of the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) epidemic in 2003, soon after the merger, made the external challenges more concrete and immediate, and this nudged officers to better understand the advantages of the merger.

“Suddenly, we realised we had more hands together working towards a common goal. Working together was something great,” recounts AC Lee-Ho Sow Heng, Director of Policy Administration and International Affairs Division at ICA.

### “SARS, ironically, helped us to really bind together.”

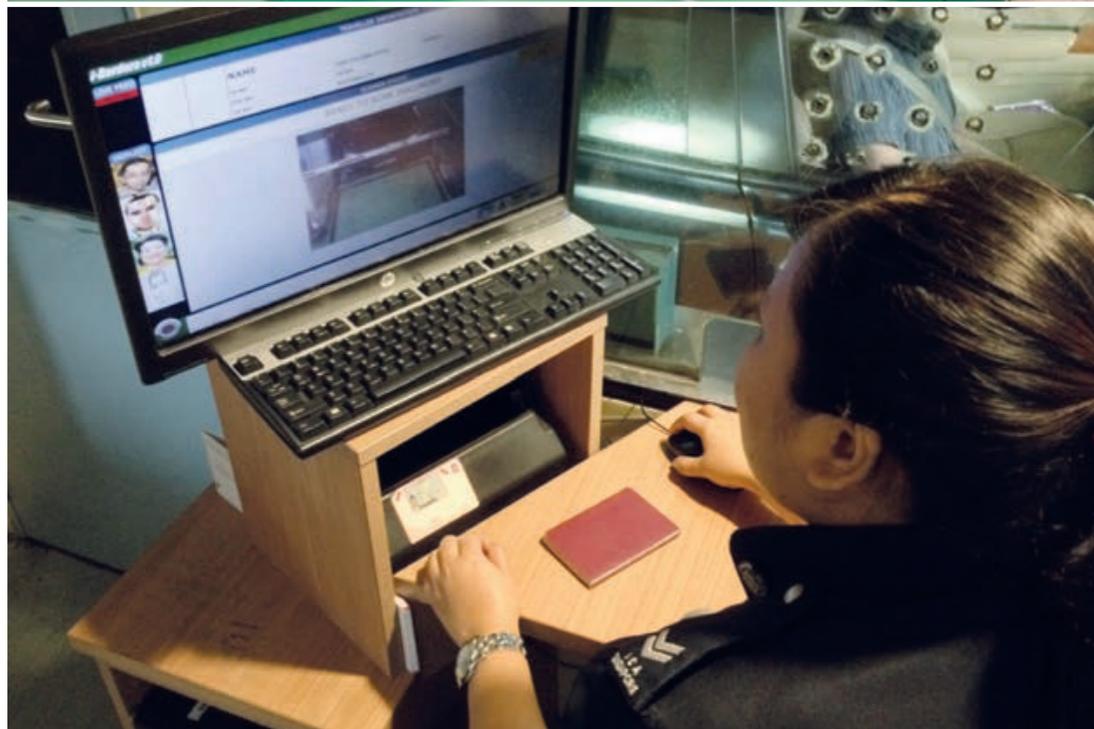
Subsequent capability enhancements enabled ICA to respond more quickly and effectively to new dangers such as chemical and biological threats. As then Deputy Prime Minister Wong Kan Seng noted: “A single authority or command over all aspects of checkpoint operations would make it easier for the sharing of critical intelligence in a timely manner, carrying out enforcement actions, as well as responding quickly to any incident or security threat.” New technology was

deployed to help handle increasing traveller volumes, including biometric equipment which matches thumbprints for even faster immigration clearance, for example, for motorcycle riders at the Causeway and Second Link border checkpoints. Learning from the US border management experience, X-ray scanners were acquired to help detect explosives and harmful materials.

In 2015, ICA enhanced its border security model to keep pace with the growing complexity of the changing operating environment, by introducing the Integrated Checkpoints Command (ICC). The ICC was established to further strengthen coordination among the Home Team agencies at the checkpoints under a unified command and control (C2) structure. The appointment of a Domain Commander at each of the Land, Sea and Air Domains has provided clearer lines of responsibility and command for the Home Team officers performing immigration, police and narcotics functions at the checkpoints. The Land Domain covers the Tuas and Woodlands Checkpoints, while the Sea Domain has 18 land-based sea checkpoints around Singapore’s coastline and the Air Domain has five air checkpoints. All three Domain Commanders report to the Commissioner of ICA.



Implemented in 2008, the Biometric Identification of Motorbikers (BIKES) uses biometric technology which matches thumbprints to automate immigration clearance for pre-registered motorcyclists at the Tuas and Woodlands Checkpoints since 2006 and 2007 respectively. BIKES II was introduced in 2010 to clear pillion riders as well.  
Photo: Immigration & Checkpoints Authority



(top) The enhanced Immigration Automated Clearance System (eIACS) reads passports and scans thumbprints, saving time queuing up at immigration counters.

(bottom) Officer using iBorders for immigration clearance at car booths at Tuas Checkpoint. The iBorders creates an integrated clearance system to capture, monitor and control the entry and exit of people, cargo and conveyances at the checkpoints.

Photos: Immigration & Checkpoints Authority



On 2 January 2015, Commissioner ICA presided over the appointment ceremony of the Domain Commander (Land) to commemorate the launch of the Integrated Checkpoints Command (ICC) at the land checkpoints. As the Domain Commander (Land) of ICC, AC Ong Choon Beng oversees all operations, including all existing Home Team (HT) units, at the Tuas and Woodlands Checkpoints. This enables closer coordination between the HT forces within the Land Domain.

AC Nam Liang Chia was appointed Domain Commander (Sea) with effect from 1 April 2015, while SAC Zuraidah Abdullah was appointed Domain Commander (Air) with effect from 1 October 2015.

Photo: Immigration & Checkpoints Authority

The ICC will be implemented in phases. The first phase, involving the appointment of Domain Commanders and the integrated C2 structures, has been implemented at the three Domains (Land Domain on 2 January 2015, Sea Domain on 1 April 2015 and Air Domain on 1 October 2015). The second phase, which is currently in progress, involves the realignment of functions among HT units and the transformation of the Domains to achieve greater operational synergy and security outcomes.

Other advances include the gathering and management of knowledge. For example, the Home Team Behavioural Sciences Centre conducts research into suspicious behaviour and provides guidelines for frontline officers so that, for example, an ICA officer might be able to detect a potential threat if he comes across one at a border checkpoint. Another research area is operations psychology, for sharpening operations and to integrate organisational, operational and officer psychology, in line with the Home Team philosophy of functional integration and holistic organisational development.

### ► STREAMLINING THE PRISONS OPERATIONS

The efforts to streamline the use of resources were extended also to penal institutions. With the scarcity of land in Singapore, the cluster of prisons at Changi was redeveloped over a few years to optimise the facilities to house inmates and to work on their rehabilitation.

A new initiative was launched in 1992 to build the Changi Prison Complex, which would be arranged in four main clusters, with 14 institutions and support facilities. The first cluster, Cluster A, was opened in 2004 and Cluster B in 2010. At the same time, the rehabilitation of offenders – which had already been part of the DNA of the Home Team for decades – saw a paradigm shift, that has in many ways enriched the nature of Singapore as a compassionate society. About 9,000 ex-offenders are released each year and face the challenge of overcoming societal discrimination – what is called “the second prison” with its invisible bars of suspicion and distrust,



Cluster A of the Changi Prison Complex was officially opened in 2004, by then DPM and Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Wong Kan Seng (left). Mr Chua Chin Kiat (right) was then Director of Prisons. *Photo: Singapore Prison Service*

even after the prison gates have been opened for them to re-enter society.

Initiated in 2004, the Yellow Ribbon Project supports ex-offenders in their reintegration back into society. The Project is organised by the Community Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex-offenders (CARE) Network, a formal structure that brings together key community and government agencies to promote seamless in-care to aftercare support for ex-offenders. The Yellow Ribbon Project seeks to foster greater awareness of the need for second chances, and inspire more Singaporeans to accept what ex-offenders can do for others, so that they can rebuild their lives and contribute to society. Prison officers became not just wardens and custodians, but “Captains of Lives”, who had the potential to create much good in the lives of others. This new approach was launched in 2001 in a highly successful campaign to change public perceptions about the work of the Prison Service, after years of internal study and refinement since 1998.



The Captains of Lives tagline inspired Prison officers to be more than wardens and custodians. Officers saw themselves as people who had the potential to create good in the lives of offenders. *Photo: Singapore Prison Service*

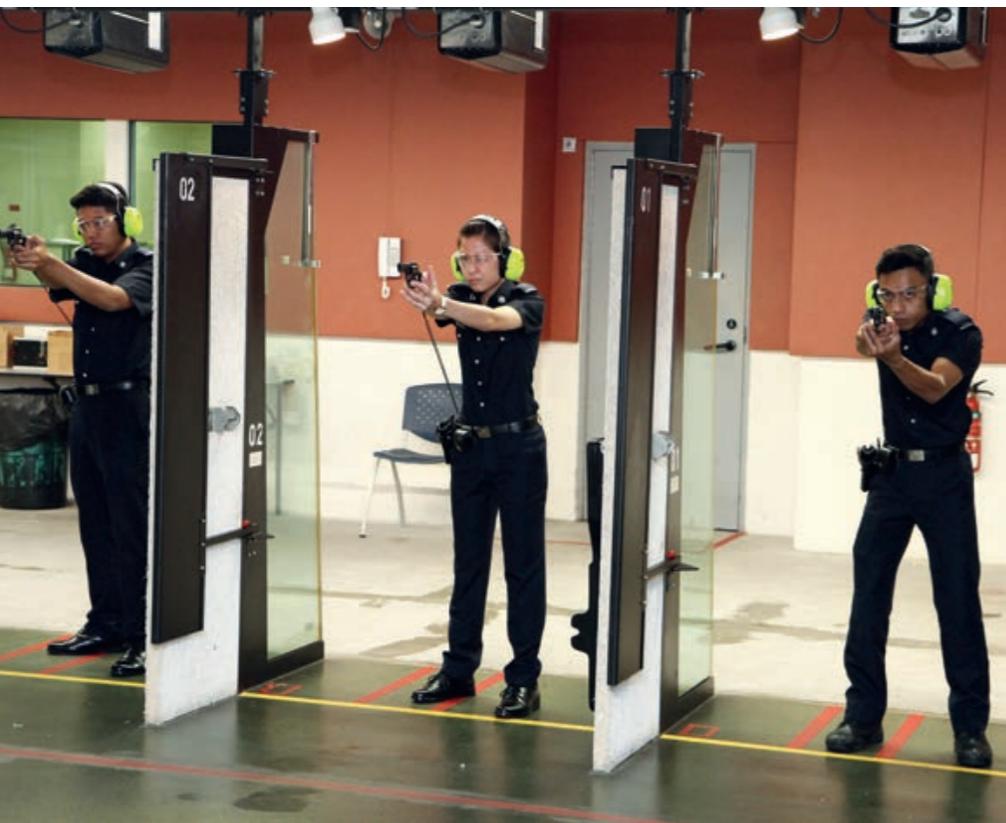


The Home Team Academy at 501 Old Chua Chu Kang Road.  
Photo: Home Team Academy

### ► HOME TEAM ACADEMY: SEEDING THE HOME TEAM CONCEPT

To develop all these new capabilities, the Home Team Academy (HTA) at Choa Chu Kang continued to invest more in training, while working to “seed” the Home Team concept and culture in new officers from the very outset. Established in 2006, HTA consolidates and conducts all training elements at all levels, from basic programmes to the most advanced courses. The Academy provides

centralised training to all Home Team officers within distinctive subjects, including Joint Operations and Crisis Leadership. Such a joint training facility had been planned since the mid-1990s. Its main aim is to train leaders and officers with the Home Team ethos and values and to operate as one Home Team. Its landmark programmes are the “milestone courses”, from basic to advanced levels, to the Senior Command and Staff Course, which is the “pinnacle” training programme for senior officers, developed



in partnership with the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. The Academy also plays a role in human resource development, for instance, by helping to develop a Home Team Command Leadership framework to identify and train officers for higher-level leadership positions. The Civil Defence Academy at Jalan Bahar, opened in 1999, performs similar roles for the SCDF in specialist areas, including firefighting and urban search and rescue.

All this while, innovations in all aspects of organisational effectiveness enhanced the capacity of Home Team agencies and officers to perform their duty. The CNB was cited by then Home Affairs Minister Wong Kan Seng in 1997 as “an early beneficiary of the Home Team concept” because the nature of the agency’s work necessitated teamwork. CNB’s portfolio expanded beyond its original focus areas of intelligence and enforcement to also include other aspects such as prevention and rehabilitation, all of them requiring partnering with other agencies.



CNB is located at the Police Cantonment Complex at 393 New Bridge Road.  
Photo: Central Narcotics Bureau

(far left) Firearms training at the Home Team Academy. Photo: Immigration & Checkpoints Authority

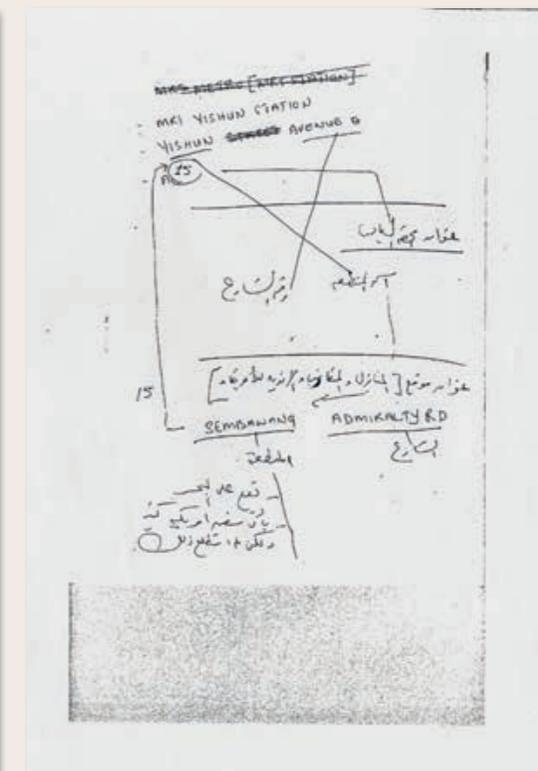
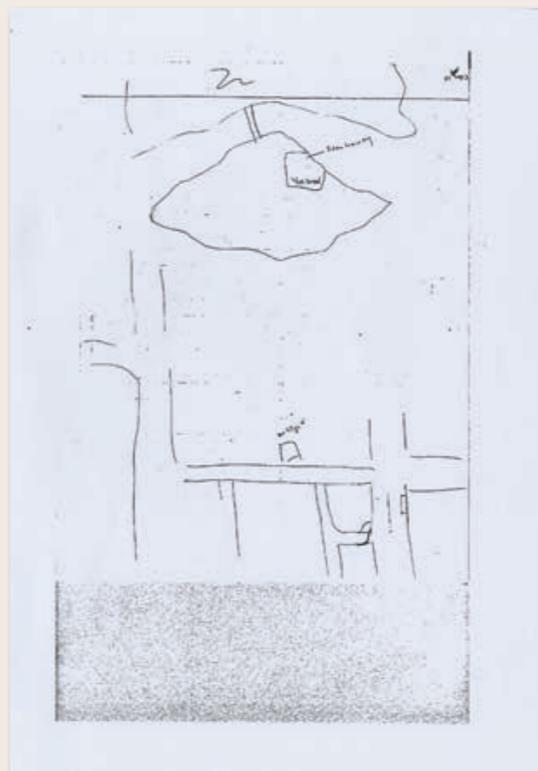
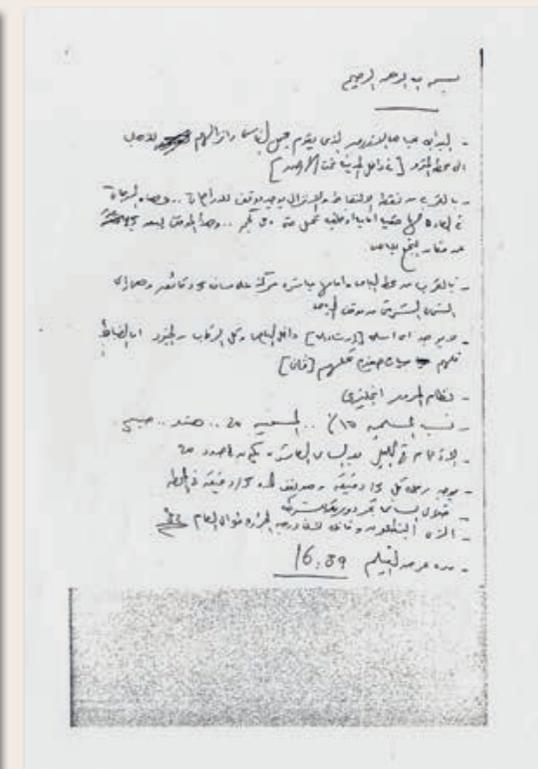
(left) SPF officers training at Home Team Academy. Photo: Singapore Police Force

► PEACE DESPITE TERROR: PRESERVING THE SOCIAL FABRIC

In December 2001, 13 members of a clandestine terrorist organisation called the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) were arrested. Another 19 JI members were arrested in August 2002. The JI members were involved in attack plans against installations in Singapore. For example, several of the JI members were working with an Al-Qaeda operative on a plot to mount truck bomb attacks against foreign missions here. Others were involved in a plan to attack a shuttle-bus service which conveyed US military personnel and their families in the Sembawang area to the Yishun MRT station. There were also plans to attack local targets like our water facilities and Changi Airport. Fortunately, these plots were foiled with the arrests of the JI members.

Had the JI succeeded in carrying out the attacks, it would have caused irreparable damage, not only of lives but also more destructively, our tightly woven social fabric. With the strong foundation of mutual trust and understanding between our communities built up over the years, we were able to withstand the strains to our communal relations arising from the JI episode. The Muslim community came out strongly and unequivocally to condemn the JI. In October 2002, representatives from 122 Malay-Muslim organisations issued a joint statement against terrorism and pledged their commitment towards maintaining racial and religious harmony in Singapore. The non-Muslim communities also demonstrated their support and solidarity with the Muslim community. Several non-Muslim leaders publicly urged their respective communities to look at the JI issue from the national perspective and not let the episode affect communal relations and harmony.

Following the JI arrests, an informal group of Islamic scholars and teachers, who subsequently became the founding members of the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), also volunteered to work with the Government to counsel and rehabilitate the JI detainees, who had been radicalised by ideas based on a distorted and misinterpreted version of Islam. Over the years, the RRG has also counselled other terrorism-related detainees beyond the JI group, like the Moro Islamic Liberation Front members and self-radicalised individuals, and helped them understand how they had been misguided by radical ideologues. Today, the RRG has become an important international reference model for community partnerships in countering terrorism.



Following the arrest of the first group of Jemaah Islamiyah detainees, the US alerted MHA to a video footage of a reconnaissance of Yishun MRT Station, together with some handwritten notes on the plot in Arabic, that were retrieved from the rubble of a senior Al-Qaeda leader's home in Afghanistan. These notes contained information on the Yishun MRT station and the shuttle bus service which ferried the US military personnel to the station. The note in Arabic contained information like the frequency of the shuttle bus service and the traffic system in Singapore. Photo: White Paper – The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests and the Threat of Terrorism

Aside from religious counselling, the RRG has also conducted outreach efforts to sensitise the public to the terrorist threat and strengthen the community's immunity against extremist ideas. In response to the threat posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in particular, the RRG has distributed pamphlets in local mosques to raise awareness of the dangers of the Syrian conflict and to debunk misconceptions that fighting in Syria is a form of *jihad*. The RRG has also produced online videos to explain why ISIS' ideology goes against Islamic teachings, so as to reach out to internet-savvy youths who are most at risk of being radicalised via social media. In June 2015, the RRG launched its helpline to provide the public with easy access to a legitimate reference point on radicalisation and extremism-related matters. Since then, the RRG has also embarked on reaching out to the Muslim congregation on the dangers of ISIS and radical ideology through short talks before the Friday sermons.

Besides religious rehabilitation, another key component of Singapore's multi-pronged rehabilitation programme is social rehabilitation. In 2002, the Inter-Agency Aftercare Group (ACG) was set up by the leaders of Taman Bacaan (Singapore Malay Youth Library Association), the Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP), Yayasan MENDAKI, Khadijah Mosque and En-Naeem Mosque. While the RRG helps to counsel detainees on their ideological misunderstanding, the ACG works on the

Ustaz Hasbi (left) and Ustaz Ali (right), co-Chairmen of the RRG.  
Photo: Home Team Academy



important task of providing emotional, social and financial support to the families of the detainees, and helping the detainees to reintegrate into society after their release. Over time, the ACG has also worked with other groups, including those from the non-Muslim communities, to do more for the detainees and their families. One such example is the Thye Hua Kwan Moral Society, which has made available full-time trained counsellors to work with the detainees' families.

Such ground-up initiatives serve to strengthen our social resilience and ensure that Singaporeans will stay united as a society in the face of the terrorism threat.

### ► MOBILISING ACTIVE CITIZENRY FOR SECURITY

The focus on counter-terrorism has remained an important area of work. Although engaging the community had been a top priority since the earliest days, it was to become formalised and refocused in an even more concerted way. Galvanised by the terrorist bombings in London in 2005, the Community Engagement Programme was launched in 2006 as an enhanced new way to build community resilience from the ground up. As then Home Affairs Minister Wong Kan Seng said at a Home Team Workshop in 2006:

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**“The programme seeks to coordinate and mobilise the support of various segments of our society to enhance the psychological and social resilience of Singaporeans. The aim is to be able to sustain social cohesion in the aftermath of a terrorist attack.”**

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To sustain social cohesion and trust among ethnic and religious communities, the Home Team worked to build relationships with organisations in five clusters – traditional grassroots bodies; the tripartite group of businesses, unions and government; schools; clans and religious groups; and media and academia.

People relations will always remain at the heart of the work of the Home Team. The effort to foster a community that is more unified for emergency preparedness

ranges from the one-to-one interaction that Home Team officers have with residents in the heartlands to large-scale events such as the Home Team Festival held at the Singapore Expo once every two years. As former Home Affairs Minister Teo Chee Hean said at a Home Team promotion ceremony in May 2015:

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**“Even as we bring technology to bear in a major way in the Home Team, the Home Team’s work remains essentially people-centric, whether you are interacting with members of the public, exercising leadership and management to motivate our officers and to lead teams through trying circumstances, or rehabilitating prison inmates.”**

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In line with societal developments, the Home Team’s relationships with community organisations saw some significant changes during this period. In 1996, the Boys’ Clubs – started in 1982 – were handed over to the People’s Association (PA), where their needs could be better met by the grassroots body’s fuller suite of activities. For example, the boys could join the PA Youth Movement at age 15. Another stalwart network of community partnership also changed. In 1997, the Neighbourhood Watch scheme – which had, in just over a decade, grown to 80,000 groups – was replaced by a Neighbourhood Watch Zone scheme, with each Zone headed by a member of a Residents’ Committee in Housing Board estates or of a Neighbourhood Committee in private estates. These members would liaise with the NPCs to organise programmes to enhance community security. The first batch of 188 Zones was launched in 1998.

The change to Neighbourhood Watch Zones was part of the Community Focus Plan that was endorsed in 1998, for the Home Team to work more closely with the Community Development Councils (CDCs). A wider-ranging Community Safety and Security Programme (CSSP) was set up to encourage residents to take the ground-up initiative to identify the safety or security issue that they wanted to work with the Home Team to solve. The first CSSP was launched in Sembawang-Hong Kah CDC in July 1998. Projects have ranged from one in Pulau Ubin in 2002, where islanders were trained to put out *lallang* fires, to one in the Geylang-Rochor area in



Officers from the Singapore Police Force play a key role in community policing.  
Photo: Singapore Police Force

2013, to hand out handheld alarms to elderly residents should they encounter crime. All these initiatives are part of the social defence aspect of Singapore's Total Defence approach. There was also a facet of alignment with a political plan at that time – the “Singapore 21” national re-visioning exercise to chart new priorities and directions as a nation for the new millennium. As then Home Affairs Minister Wong Kan Seng said at the Police Workplan Seminar of 2000, the work of the Home Team helped to facilitate “active citizenship”, one of the five tenets of the “Singapore 21” Vision.

#### ► A SAFER REGION AND WORLD, AS WELL

As its capabilities and confidence grew from strength to strength, the Home Team's influence extended beyond the shores of home. SCDF, for example, played a major role in helping the region through its Operation Lionheart missions overseas, such as the one to Khao Lak, Thailand in the wake of the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004. Associate Professor (Lieutenant-Colonel (NS)) Mohan Tiru, Deputy Chief Medical



LTC Alvin Tan, Commander of the Operation Lionheart contingent, discussing tactical plans with the international Urban Search and Rescue Teams. Standing on the far right is LTC (ORNS) Mohamed Razaleigh bin Mohamed Saem, Deputy Commander of the contingent. Photo: Singapore Civil Defence Force



Officers from the Singapore Civil Defence Force Operation Lionheart contingent boarding a C-130 aircraft, one of two planes carrying supplies and personnel that took off from Singapore for Nepal on 26 April 2015. The contingent was the largest ever Home Team contingent involved in disaster relief efforts. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

Officer of the SCDF Medical Department, recalls how, despite having been to the airport before, he could not recognise it, as the airport was filled with beds and trolleys, with hundreds of major trauma patients every day. SCDF officers had to rough it out, finding rest in a most unusual location.

**“Every available airport facility was fully packed to the extent that we did not even have any space to rest after a long and hard day of work. We ended up sleeping on the tarmac of the airport.”**

SCDF's other regional partnerships include a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2004 with the Chinese Earthquake Administration to enhance collaboration and exchange expertise in urban disaster management, and being part of the United Nations' International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), a global network of more than 80 countries. As a member of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management, SCDF participates in the ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX) which entails joint exercises involving teams from all 10 ASEAN Member States simulating response to situations such as quakes and typhoons. In April 2015, in the wake of the Nepal earthquake, SCDF sent its team to be part of the largest-ever Home Team contingent for overseas disaster relief. The 126 officers from SCDF and SPF, including three SCDF ORNS officers, carried out search and rescue operations, rendered medical assistance and provided humanitarian aid.

Sergeant Abdul Hamid (front, left), an emergency medical technician (EMT), and First Warrant Officer (NS) Mohd Norhan (front, right) from the Singapore Civil Defence Force, were among eight SCDF officers who participated in the ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX), a regional disaster emergency exercise held in Hanoi, Vietnam from 21 to 24 October 2013. The exercise simulated a typhoon disaster. They are seen here evacuating a “victim” from a collapsed building. SGT Abdul Hamid is the first EMT from the SCDF to be sent for an overseas assignment.

*Photo: Singapore Press Holdings*





The INTERPOL Complex at Napier Road.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

The Home Team has also worked closely with international organisations such as INTERPOL to tackle the scourge of transnational crime, including cybercrime. The INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation (IGCI) was opened in 2015. It is a cutting-edge research and development facility for the identification of crimes and criminals, innovative training, operational support and partnerships. The Singapore facility complements the General Secretariat in Lyon, France, and enhances the organisation's presence in Asia. The International Cooperation Department (ICD) of the Police Force was established in 2009 with the mission to prevent and fight crime effectively through heightened international police cooperation. It also functions



Mr Masagos Zulkifli, former Second Minister for Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs, addressing delegates at INTERPOL's 22nd Asian Regional Conference on 15 April 2015. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

as the INTERPOL National Central Bureau for Singapore. This collaboration with INTERPOL is reaping good results. An INTERPOL-coordinated operation targeting illegal soccer gambling networks across Asia during the 2014 FIFA soccer World Cup for example, led to more than 1,400 arrests and the seizure of almost US\$12 million. During the six-week operation, law enforcement officers from China, Hong Kong, Macao, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam carried out more than 1,000 raids on illegal gambling dens – many controlled by organised crime gangs – estimated to have handled around US\$2.2 billion worth of bets, the majority through illicit websites.

The Home Team's regional and international influence extended to the sharing of knowledge, especially of Singapore's successful adaptation of the Japanese Koban Community Policing System (COPS) since 1983. The SPF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japanese International Cooperation Agency, and the National Police Agency of Japan, have held yearly seminars on community policing strategies evolving from the Koban system for Asia Pacific countries to learn more about the two policing systems. The Home Team Academy has also held regional events such as workshops with the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Naval Criminal Investigative Service to share knowledge on terrorism threats.

As former Home Affairs Minister Teo Chee Hean said at a Home Team pioneers tribute event in 2015:

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**“The harmony, order and stability that we all enjoy today would not be possible without our pioneers’ contributions and sacrifices. You did your duty, without fear or favour. You helped to make Singapore a safe and secure home for all of us. Today, Singaporeans are able to go about their daily lives, raise a family, carry on their business – freely, free from the constant worry for their safety and security. This is a mission that Home Team officers continue to uphold, to this day, every day.”**

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Once order and stability – the chief preoccupations of the 1960s and 1970s – had been established, the attention shifted to harmony, where working with the community has always been vital. Harmony has been the focus of the decades since, and all indications are that this will remain so for the decades to come as well.

# Officers AT Home

The officers and ex-officers of the Home Team – pioneers, serving officers and National Service recruits – are a group of men and women with wide-ranging skills and diverse backgrounds. Their experiences in the Home Team, taken collectively, cover the span from 1959 to the present day. In fact, some officers' careers cover the entire history of SG50. What the pioneers lacked in terms of sophisticated technology was more than compensated for by their resourcefulness, initiative and improvisation. The scope of the Home Team officers' work stretches from the regular patrols in the neighbourhoods to overseas missions in distant lands. What spurs them on are the core values of Honour and Unity, their devotion to duty, and the synergy garnered from teamwork. These values are demonstrated daily with courage, integrity, focus and sacrifice. It doesn't matter how seemingly small the action, or how routine the task, whether far behind the scenes or right on the frontline in the thick of the action – the dedication to the values never wavers. And through it all, the danger to life and limb, the stress and strain, what holds them together is always the commitment to something much larger than themselves – to the community, and to the common cause of keeping this nation safe and secure.



# A PIONEER since 1959



► Mr Leong Whye Kay,  
Ministry of Home Affairs

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



Mr Leong Whye Kay, 75, is a true Home Team pioneer from the earliest days of Singapore's self-government. He joined the Singapore Police Force (SPF) in 1959 as a civilian, just after the People's Action Party first came into power. In 1959, it was hard to get a job, and unemployment was high. He applied to the Public Service Commission, and was posted to the SPF. He served there until 1986, when he became Head of Registry and Office Manager at the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) until his retirement in 2002.

During the race riots of the 1960s, he was at the Police Academy. He and his fellow officers played a supporting role, going around the streets to distribute food to the police recruits who were helping to keep the peace. During that time, he was one of the few people who could move around freely because he had a "curfew pass". "We only left work to go home after the curfew. With that pass, we were allowed to walk on the streets. After the curfew, the roads were so deserted!"

The announcement of Singapore's independence on 9 August 1965 actually impacted his work – immediately. Mr Leong vividly recalls that on that day, he was helping with the interviews of new recruits into the Force. Suddenly, someone heard on the radio news that Singapore had separated from Malaysia. The recruitment interviews stopped halfway for Malaysian recruits, and only carried on with Singaporeans.

Another incident he recalls well occurred in 1986, when he was at the Police Headquarters. The Lian Yak building, more commonly known as Hotel New World, collapsed

on a Saturday. Early on Sunday morning, he received a call, asking him to report to the office. Together with the office superintendent, he took the word processor and moved it to the crisis command centre at Serangoon, for the staff there to use. Every day, he would alternate shifts with a colleague to ensure that there was strong office support for the rescue operation.

With his wide-ranging experience in the areas of Human Resource, General Administration, National Service Records and Crime Records with the Police Force, he was asked in 1986 to take over as Head of Registry and Office Manager at MHA. MHA's HQ and SPF's HQ then were in the same compound at Old Phoenix Park. His duties included taking care of mail and documents, and also acting as fire safety and security officer.

Mr Leong's dedication to duty has left lasting benefit for his Home Team colleagues. Indeed, one could even say that there is a legacy to his perseverance. At the registry, he was involved in two major projects – the computerisation of the registry system and microfilming files dating back to the 1970s to protect them from deterioration, including from termite attacks and even spiders and cockroaches. These files were essential for, among other things, retrieving information to respond to Parliament questions. Doing this took almost 10 years. "It was a tedious process. But I had to take it on personally. I could not expect my colleagues to do it. As the supervisor, I had to be the one to decide what to do with the files." With this herculean effort, those files are now e-accessible – possibly forever more.

# The SG50 STALWART



► CI (Ret.) Mohd  
Anwar bin Abdullah  
@ Teo Ah Hock,  
Immigration &  
Checkpoints Authority

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



There is one Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) officer whose service remarkably spans almost the whole period of SG50 – from 1967 to 2013. Checkpoint Inspector 2 (Retired) Mohamed Anwar bin Abdullah alias Teo Ah Hock, 68, joined the Immigration Department in 1967, retired as a Senior Checkpoint Inspector (I) at Airport Command in September 2008, and was then re-employed at the Air Cargo and Airport Command until 2013. Throughout his long, steadfast service, he was called upon to perform many demanding duties that are representative of the old Singapore of earlier decades.

CI (Ret.) Mohd Anwar Teo's first posting was to Telok Ayer Basin at Prince Edward Road, where he handled mostly barter traders from Indonesia. His job included registering traders entering Singapore, and the items that they brought in, such as tin, oil, rubber and fish, and establishing who their local agents were. For those with coolies, he would check the photos to make sure that all persons declared were on board. There were some empty tankers about three storeys high, he recalls, that tested his daring and dedication.

"There was no gangway for you to go up, you had to climb up a rope ladder. So, if you slipped, you would fall straight down into the water!"

Later, he was attached to other sections, such as the lockup, where he had to take care of mainly illegal immigrants and overstayers. Some had to be escorted to the courts for hearing and sentencing, or to be repatriated. At Woodlands Checkpoint, his role was car clearance. "There was no air-con, not even a booth, we just sat at a table and did the

clearance." This was a challenging task, given that the officers had to grapple with the heat and fumes of vehicles at the checkpoint, and do their job with limited resources.

After that, he was posted to Intelligence in 1974 and stayed there till 2010. His command of Malay came in handy to help handle illegal immigrants from Indonesia. Many were caught at places such as worksites, pig farms and the Bukit Timah Turf Club.

"We had to be very cautious when we went in to arrest them, because a lot of them had concealed *parangs* or axes which they said were for self-defence."

Once, when he and his colleagues opened a door, they encountered a man holding a spear. Fortunately he did not attack them, and his documents checked out.

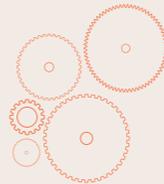
The hours were also very long, requiring stamina and, often, steely determination. "When we work in Intelligence, there is no day, no night. Any time they call, we have to go."

Sometimes he had to conduct surveillance for more than 24 hours at a stretch. He also had to trail vehicles and join in operations such as raids, where they had to ensure that the place was properly cordoned off. Joint operations with the police were common, mostly to check on illegal immigrants working in pubs.

One memorable experience was his biggest case when his team busted a drug trafficking syndicate based in Johor Baru. After an all-night operation from midnight to dawn, the traffickers were arrested when they arrived in Singapore by boat at the Senoko coast, with a Malaysian boatman couple.

"After such results, everyone was very, very happy, and the boss was also very happy."

## She had to **ARREST** a **NEIGHBOUR**



► **Mdm Rosalind Soon,**  
Singapore Police Force

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



It is difficult to arrest someone you know well. Madam Rosalind Soon, 81, who was with the Singapore Police Force from 1951 to 1974, had this experience when she had to interrogate a neighbour from the same *kampung*.

"She and my cousin were very good friends. She had taken money, and asked me to throw the money away, but I said I could not. During the interrogation, she didn't allow me to leave the room. The other officers knocked on the door asking why we were taking so long. 'Why so long? Open the door!' they had shouted. They were worried that something had happened to me inside."

The neighbour was taken to the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau. She ran into Madam Soon again many years later, after her retirement. "She looked at me, I looked at her. I had not forgotten but I never asked her anything. She was still good to me and we did talk, because the past is in the past. To arrest her was my duty; I had to do it."

Joining the Police Force as a teenager, Madam Soon was in the eighth batch of eight female officers, and she has practically seen it all. In her early years, her duties included regulating traffic for schoolchildren at Ann Siang Hill, escorting mentally ill, accused women to then Woodbridge

Hospital and those who were suicidal to Singapore General Hospital, and arresting prostitutes at Capitol Theatre, among other places. With the Narcotics Branch, she raided opium dens in Chinatown. With the Gambling Unit, she was the one who first knocked on the doors, and rounded up housewives who were illegal gamblers. As a telephone operator, she manned the 7200 calls, which were to specific police stations, as opposed to the general 999 calls. She had to do this task after the civilian phone operators went on strike. Through it all, she always felt part of a team. "When you're on these kinds of duty, the detectives will all look after you. If anything happens, we just whistle. I trusted them and knew them well, because we were all working together. When we work, we must trust people."

With 23 years of rich experience in the Force, she is well qualified to advise younger officers. "Respect superiors, trust your fellow workers, help one another. Be patient, be kind. Be forgiving – no one is perfect." Above all, she maintained a sense of duty, like all those years ago when the *kampung* spirit could not get in the way of the law. "For me, duty is duty, friend is friend. Work should always be separated from personal matters."

## **A RICH, DIVERSE CAREER**

– From Arresting Cows  
to Nabbing Drug Addicts

► **SUPT (Ret.) Masbollah bin Fazal,**  
Singapore Police Force  
and Central Narcotics Bureau

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



When he was in secondary school, Superintendent 2 (Retired) Masbollah bin Fazal, 74, used to pay 10 cents to watch open-air movies that were screened on weekends in an open field. Some of these movies were detective stories. "Watching them made me interested in joining the Police Force, so I felt that if I could become a police officer and apprehend crooks, I could do something for society and help make Singapore crime-free."

So SUPT (Ret.) Masbollah joined the Singapore Police Force in 1961 and served with the Home Team until his retirement in 1996, in a distinguished and meaningful career spanning 35 years.

After becoming a Constable in 1961, he was posted to Kandang Kerbau Police Station, where Tekka Market is today. In the less urbanised Singapore of days gone by, one unusual task that he had to perform was to join a team of four officers to "arrest" cattle. They were supposed to look for stray cows, especially along Dunearn Road, where the Swiss Cottage Secondary School used to be. At that time, there were many cows there that were not well looked after by their owners, so they roamed around Dunearn Road.

"Our job was to herd these cows – in uniform, mind you! – to Rumah Miskin Police Station. There, the owners would have to pay a fine to collect their cows. This was something I didn't expect to do when I joined the force!"

His dedication to the task was always unquestioned. During the race riots of 1969, he was with the Criminal Investigation Department, and worked in plain clothes, going down to the ground for patrols and other duties. For the first two weeks, none of the officers in his team were allowed to go home, not even to change clothes. "So we

slept in our small office, on our desks, and showered in the office toilets."

In August 1990, SUPT (Ret.) Masbollah was posted to the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), where he was appointed to the position of Deputy Director CNB. He had to learn about a new area of work, drawing on his experience in enforcement. At that time, the drug relapse rate was quite high, at over 70 per cent. Much effort was put in to try to lower the relapse rate, and to bust drug syndicates.

One interesting case he oversaw involved a huge drug seizure in April 1996 from a container ship with 20 compressors holding drugs that were heading to another country. The police had to get the help of the Singapore Civil Defence Force to use a special type of cutter to open the compressors. They found 72kg of an expensive type of heroin – Number 4 heroin. The total worth of the seized heroin was around \$70 million. This haul still stands as a record, and one of the compressors is displayed in the CNB heritage gallery. SUPT Mas (as he is fondly called) says, "this was a really solid find" – and quite a different task, to say the least, from herding stray cows.

Looking back on his career, he shares the personal values underlying his self-motivation all those years – discipline, dedication, honesty and humility. Humility, he says, is important because it enables one to get to know other people, whom one will need to call upon later for help to solve problems. Humility is also what he emphasises most in the advice he would give to younger officers: "Never forget to work as a team. You need the support of your fellow officers. When you do your work, put aside whatever differences you have, and work together."

# NO PART TOO SMALL

► SSGT (Ret.) Fareed Khan, Singapore Police Force



Photo: Home Team Academy

The late Staff Sergeant (Retired) Fareed Khan demonstrated how initiative matters to the whole Home Team effort. At the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Headquarters in Old Phoenix Park, he was always the first to reach the office at 7am. If it was raining, he would, on his own initiative, drive a minivan to the bus stop to pick his colleagues up, sometimes doing up to five round trips. To him, such a “service” was crucial to the unit. “These people are very important. We need them in the office. If they get wet very often, they will get sick, and work will stop.”

Although his part in some operations may have seemed relatively minor, compared to his colleagues on the frontline, his commitment went beyond the call of duty. Once, during the civil unrest involving student protesters in 1956, he was stationed in front of Chung Cheng High School when he received a message saying that tear gas was needed at Whitley Road. “There was insufficient manpower, so I said never mind, I go alone.” The roads were so badly jammed that he strapped one haversack with tear gas in front of his body and another haversack with riot guns on his back, and ran all the way to deliver the gas. He used the gas once along the way to disperse rioters who would have held him up from his delivery. When asked what made him do it, he simply replied, “They asked for help. If I don’t help, who will?”

SSGT (Ret.) Fareed was born in Pakistan in 1930 and moved to Singapore at the age of five. He served as a bugler in the Royal Squad for 10 years, and thereafter served as an instructor and driver in the Force Transport Branch (FTB), tasked to train older-generation Gurkha officers because he could speak Urdu and Hindi. He was on deployment in 1955, when workers from the Hock Lee Amalgamated Bus Company went on strike, leading to a massive riot. During the *Konfrontasi* era, he was stationed at Mount Vernon on 24-hour standby.

During the 1974 *Laju* ferry hijack, he was assigned to drive the terrorists from the Marine Police Station at Kallang to Paya Lebar Airport and never abandoned his duty even when circumstances grew frightful. He was worried for his family should anything happen to him, but kept on going. After the terrorists had disembarked, there was a blackout at the airport, which got some people worried, but he stayed put. All he had on his mind was his Commanding Officer’s instruction to him to never leave his vehicle. “After we heard ‘all stand down’, I didn’t look back, I didn’t look left or right, I just drove straight back to FTB.”

SSGT (Ret.) Fareed Khan passed away in April 2015, leaving behind a legacy of service for others, and for the nation.

# The FATHER of DART



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► LTC (Ret.) Poon Siow Hai, Singapore Civil Defence Force

Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Poon Siow Hai is known as “the father of DART”, the Singapore Civil Defence Force’s (SCDF) elite Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (DART). As the unit’s first Commander in 1990, he laid the foundation for it to grow into an internationally renowned urban search and rescue team.

LTC (Ret.) Poon, 63, first joined the Vigilante Corps (VC) that was established in 1964 in response to *Konfrontasi*, and performed a range of duties including patrolling to identify suspicious characters and activities. These pioneering experiences honed his sense of duty as well as the tenacity to excel even with very limited resources and in the face of real danger. After the VC was disbanded, he was assigned to the Civil Defence Force in 1983.

As Commander of DART, he introduced a training curriculum that included, apart from theoretical and psycho-motor training, the inculcation of mental and character resilience. LTC (Ret.) Poon shared that “this line of work also requires them to be able to remain calm yet tough and resilient under extreme conditions.”

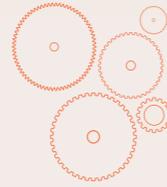
These qualities were called upon especially in overseas missions. When the 12-storey Highland Towers in Selangor, Malaysia collapsed due to a landslide in 1993, the DART contingent was then newly established. “Yet, nothing stopped us from upholding our operational readiness and we were the first foreign team to arrive at the scene.” DART worked tirelessly with their Malaysian counterparts for about 10 days.

At the earthquake in Taichung, Taiwan in 1999, the destruction was unimaginable. The DART team worked with their Taiwanese counterparts under extremely challenging and risky conditions, where the men could easily have been trapped. During one of the search operations, he and three DART rescuers were trapped in a confined space due to an aftershock. LTC (Ret.) Poon recounted that “It felt like a near-death experience!” There was no way out for them without assistance, so they remained calm while waiting for help and drew strength and confidence from their training and experience.

On another occasion, he and his team had to enter a semi-collapsed building in search of more casualties. The earthquake had caused the 18-storey building to tilt, leaning precariously against an adjacent structure. Given the dangerous situation, he asked for only two men to go in with him to conduct the operation. Soon after, as he moved forward, he realised that the entire team had tagged along. “The fearlessness and dedication of my men moved me tremendously.”

Reflecting on his career, LTC (Ret.) Poon shared that what motivated him was the dedication and perseverance of his colleagues. “It was always a team effort ... what impressed me then – as now – was the ‘never-say-die’ attitude of our pioneer batch of DART personnel. Our principle then was simple and is an enduring legacy – train hard.”

## A FAMILY of FIREFIGHTERS



► SSGT (Ret.) Abdul Rahim bin Mohd Taib, Singapore Civil Defence Force

Photo: Singapore Civil Defence Force

The fireman's spirit runs deep in the family of Staff Sergeant (Retired) Abdul Rahim bin Mohd Taib, 65, who joined the Singapore Fire Brigade in 1968 at age 18 and retired from the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) in 2005, in a career spanning 37 years. During his childhood days on St John's Island, a veteran firefighter who was his neighbour encouraged him to become a firefighter after leaving school. He did have some interest to join, so he did. When Shahrul Rizal Abdul Rahim, the second of his three sons, was still young, he liked to play with his father and his fellow firemen on weekends. Sometimes, they showed Shahrul the firefighting equipment and talked to him about firefighting. This was how Shahrul got interested to join the SCDF. When he was asked whether his own son – SSGT Abdul Rahim's grandson – would become a fireman too, Shahrul unhesitatingly says: "Yes."

SSGT (Ret.) Abdul Rahim was involved in most of the major fires in Singapore's history. At the Robinson's fire on 21 November 1972, he was in the second support team. Because the fire was too big, the first support team needed backup. They worked in two shifts, from 8am to 6pm and 6pm to 8am. When he and his colleagues arrived at the scene, the Robinson's building was totally alight. So they used a big nozzle to create a water curtain – using water pumped from the Singapore River – to protect the nearby buildings and stop the fire from spreading. He was involved

in finding out where the lifts were. "The fire caused the building and its vicinity to become extremely hot. It was humanly impossible for anyone to go near it, let alone enter the building to locate the lifts." The fire claimed the lives of nine victims who were trapped in the lifts.

Thinking back over the years, SSGT (Ret.) Abdul Rahim recalls that the worst fire he ever encountered was the one at Pulau Merlimau, Jurong Island, in 1988. There were three firefighting teams, and each team had to stay on-site, actively fighting the inferno for about 10 hours each. He did not go home for three days. The fire took three days to put out, but he and his colleagues had to standby there for up to one month after that. "We used Compressed Air Foam to put out the fire ... can you imagine, four crude oil tanks had burst ... so much oil inside, so the scale of the fire was just massive. We were told by a senior officer that there were many gas tanks down there, so if one of them had burst, we would have been injured as well."

What kept him going was a deep sense of duty that also runs through the family. "It never occurred to me to stop being a fireman and to go do something else. In some of the incidents, bricks had fallen on me and all that, but I was not seriously injured. My late father told me, when we start work, you work in that job until you retire, don't change. That piece of advice formed a deep impression on me. ... It gave me the strength to go through these challenges."

## WORKING with the UNSUNG HEROES



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► CPT (Ret.) Alice Goh, Singapore Civil Defence Force

Care and respect are the hallmarks of Captain (Retired) Alice Goh's approach to her work as Head Ambulance Officer with the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF). The work is uncertain, as the situation is always an emergency or crisis, and there is no way of knowing the condition of patients until one arrives at the scene. Nonetheless, ambulance attendants must always approach patients with care and feeling, and treat them with respect – this is something she always told her crew.

As Head Ambulance Officer, CPT (Ret.) Goh, 68, was activated when there was a big fire or when the casualty count was potentially high. She recalls well her first emergency turnout to a fire at the Bugis area, and came to see for herself what the work really involved. "I saw how the firefighters were charging towards the big fire when everyone else was running away from it. They worked so hard. No amount of words can accurately describe the way they put the lives of others before theirs. It was there and then that I fully understood why people have been calling firefighters unsung heroes."

When the ambulance attendants' team celebrated their 10th year in 1987, she told herself that they should aim to enhance their status by the next 10 years. So, it must have been gratifying to see the institutionalisation of the SCDF's

paramedic scheme by that time. This was one of the initiatives to enhance the professionalism of this area of work in SCDF. In those days before SCDF came into being, there was no paramedic scheme, and ambulance attendants were nurses seconded from the hospitals to Singapore Fire Service (SFS). She was glad that the ambulance attendants who had been seconded to SFS could continue to work there even after their secondments were over.

To her, nursing brings its own sources of satisfaction. "Whenever you witness the recovery journey of a patient who had been under your care for a period of time, you will definitely feel a sense of reward." She remembers too, one of her patients, a four-year-old girl diagnosed with cancer. She was the only nurse that the girl could connect with and trust. She looked after the girl with care, and when the patient died, she was heartbroken, but gratified to have helped the patient in difficult times.

Her own work at SCDF allowed her to capitalise on her experience in hospital emergency services from her earlier nursing days. What kept her going in her work was a passion for nursing and first aid, which she had since her days with the Girl Guides in secondary school. "It is a life-changing and enriching experience that no amount of money can buy. If given a chance, I would still want to be a nurse all over again."

# ARCHITECT of FIRE SAFETY

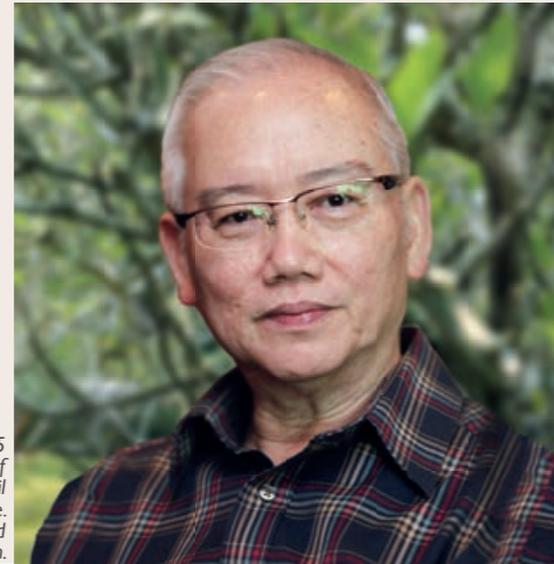
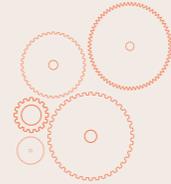


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► Mr Boo Geok Kwang,  
Singapore Civil Defence Force

Behind the safety enjoyed in Singapore, many people toil in the background, on aspects that are seldom considered, such as fire safety regulation. One of these people behind the scenes is Mr Boo Geok Kwang, 65, the former Director of the Fire Safety and Shelter Department, who played a key role in formulating the Singapore Fire Code, which helps ensure that buildings are safe from threats in fire situations.

His fascination with buildings developed from childhood, when he was growing up living in a pre-war shophouse in the Tanjong Pagar area. Singapore had very few tall buildings in those days. The 12-storey Asia Insurance Building was then the tallest in Southeast Asia. "I remember I used to be so fascinated by how majestic the buildings looked to me. ... I wondered how they could be made safe when they were of that height."

With a degree in building construction, he was employed at the Control Division of the Public Works Department (PWD) from 1982, working on areas of building design such as structural safety. In 1985, he was seconded from PWD to join the newly formed Fire Safety Bureau of the Singapore Fire Service before it became part of the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF).

The approval of building plans used to be very tedious; everything was hand-drawn and written. The whole process could take four years for a big project like Raffles City. In 1986, a Fire Safety and Shelter Department Committee was formed to study how the approval process could be improved, working together with professional institutions such as the Singapore Institute of Architects, Association for Consulting Engineers and Institution of Fire Engineers.

Through these partnerships, a lot of feedback was also collected on the Fire Code, which had come into force in

1974 after the big fire at Robinson's department store. A Fire Code Review Committee was formed and began to work with industry players to enhance the regulations. "Our goal was to educate the industry practitioners. We wanted the architects to be able to check their own work and identify for us the areas that may require waivers instead. In doing so, they will be more precise in their drawings and, in turn, this forces them to think through thoroughly before submission. ... Over the years, we have successfully imbued in the architects a deep sense of self-awareness."

One of his projects that he felt excited about is Raffles City, which had the world's tallest hotel when it was completed in 1986. Some people thought the mall's huge atrium space was a fire hazard, but Mr Boo was confident about its sprinkler fire protection system. "To me, it was just beautiful and grand." This sense of pride is an example of the abiding spirit of SCDF officers, in the way that they put in their best effort to work hard "backstage", as it were, to ensure that the final product – what happens "on stage" for the country – is something that they truly take pride in.

Having played a key role in what goes on behind the scenes in building construction, he knows what it really takes to sustain safety – the attention to detail that is required for stability, safety and security. "I feel for the architects and engineers in Singapore, as they are required to be very meticulous. People take it for granted because they do not experience the process of what goes into the design. It is usually under-appreciated until something happens when safety precautions are breached." On not becoming an architect (one of his earlier career aspirations), he jokes: "I ended up regulating architects for the rest of my career instead of being regulated!"

# The BEST "WEAPON" is RESPECT

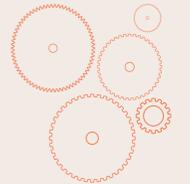


Photo: Home  
Team Academy

► DSP (Ret.) Morton Jr William Adam,  
Singapore Prison Service

One aspect of being a pioneer officer is having the chance to introduce and operationalise innovations into service. For Deputy Superintendent 1 (Retired) Morton Jr William Adam, 65, he got to select, try out and implement new armaments such as anti-riot rubber bullets and PR (Protect & Restrain) batons and pepper spray to deal effectively with prison riots.

The former Commander of the Singapore Prison Emergency Action Response (SPEAR) Force served 37 years with the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) from 1970 until his retirement. To set up the Special Action Prison Unit (SAPU), the precursor of SPEAR, he led his officers to undergo training at the Army's Commando Camp to acquire critical skills such as rappelling. He had 32 trainees; only 12 passed. SAPU's main task was to patrol and protect key prison institutions. The first set of equipment he was given included a Land Rover that had previously been used to pull garbage around Changi Prison, and three Federal riot guns, but with the wrong ammunition.

The small anti-riot unit was tested during the unrest at Telok Paku, a wooden detention barracks for drug addicts, in the 1980s. This was around the time of the major drug-busting Operation Ferret, and there were thousands of drug inmates. Upon hearing the announcement of new detention orders, the inmates started to shout and riot and wanted to break down the dormitories. SPEAR was called

and was stationed there for almost two weeks, with the men eating and sleeping at Telok Paku. "That was SPEAR's first riot experience. This woke us up and made us think: Are we ready to deal with riots? And we said no, because we didn't have the proper equipment or ammunition."

So DSP (Ret.) Morton researched overseas, to see what equipment that were being used in other countries could be applied to Singapore's context. This led to the introduction of the Arwen 37, a palm action gun with beanbag rounds, which can fire projectiles to injure but not to kill. SPS was the first in Asia to use the Arwen 37 gun, and the Singapore Police Force borrowed the gun to show to foreign dignitaries and later adopted it too. DSP (Ret.) Morton also asked a friend who practised Aikido to teach his team some Aikido techniques. These techniques were adopted along with the PR 24 baton.

Despite all the weapons he had, for DSP (Ret.) Morton, the best form of restraint is not to use force at all. "For us to gain respect, we have to give respect. Inmates are also humans, so we need to respect them. And this respect, in fact, goes a long way. Many times, we avoided using force because they listened to us." In dealing with the Telok Paku incident, for example, the best "weapon" was respect. "The inmates knew me quite well, so they knew me and knew my style. So the respect was there, and that is how we managed to pull through."

# FINDING the SOFT SPOTS



► SUPT (Ret.) Leo Teng Jit,  
Singapore Prison Service

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



Superintendent (Retired) Leo Teng Jit, 67, exemplified the essence of being a Captain of Lives even before its inception in 2002, throughout his time with the Home Team since 1972, until his retirement from the Singapore Prison Service in 2006.

As Superintendent of the now-defunct Selarang Park Drug Rehabilitation Centre, he found maintaining physical security a great challenge. The Centre was not purpose-built, but consisted of several old buildings that used to be British army quarters, converted for Prisons' use. The security issues were compounded by the sprawling Centre being sited on both sides of a road. Inmates going for visits had to be transferred from one side of the road to the other, posing security risks. CCTV cameras could not cover the sprawling grounds.

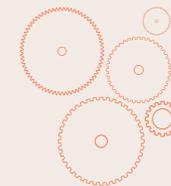
Hence, SUPT (Ret.) Leo had to add to the security by using "soft" measures, such as putting more officers on "intelligence" work. Each officer was assigned about 20 cases. The officers had to get to know the inmates well to find out if they had problems and to nip any tensions in the bud, so that inmates would have peace of mind, and not think of creating unrest or escaping. He also conducted monthly orientation sessions with new inmates, getting to know them and their problems better. Volunteers were also engaged from religious institutions and volunteer organisations, to counsel inmates. The Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE) was also helpful in keeping inmates meaningfully engaged through work, skills training and other activities.

On managing manpower, he stressed the importance of gaining – as opposed to demanding – the respect of inmates, so they would share more about their problems. He also made it a point to be personally involved in Work Improvement Team (WIT) projects, and won the Most Distinguished WIT Chairman (Institution) Award in 2000.

When he was the Superintendent of Changi Prison, he dealt with some of Singapore's toughest, most hardened criminals. In this maximum security facility, punishments such as confinement and caning had not much impact. Instead, he emphasised a "soft approach", getting to know inmates well and finding out their soft spots – family aspects or other things the inmates cared about. "I can reach you if I can correctly identify your soft spot and use that to help you," he says.

There was a foreign inmate who, within a week of being transferred to Changi Prison, appeared gravely distressed and displayed angst. SUPT (Ret.) Leo found out what exactly was bothering the inmate – he was concerned for his family back home. So, SUPT (Ret.) Leo promised to get his expired passport renewed within a month, and asked him to behave in the meantime. When the time came to go home, the inmate had no money. Other inmates came forward and donated money from prison work to help him go home. To SUPT (Ret.) Leo, this incident shows what can happen when inmates are shown respect and treated well – the inmates in turn learn to respect and treat others well. "I personally believe every criminal would like to change for the better if given the chance. I believe we should not give up on anybody."

# A FAMILY BOYS' CLUB



► SSGT (Ret.) Philip Xavier,  
Singapore Police Force

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



The Police Boys' Clubs are relics of the early history of the Force's youth engagement. Staff Sergeant (Retired) Philip Xavier, 69, was there from the very beginning. Under the community policing initiative, the first Boys' Club was set up in MacPherson in 1982. This early precursor of a youth movement was the brainchild of former Police Commissioner Mr Goh Yong Hong. Four officers took care of that inaugural club – one secretary, two corporals and one constable. "I was the corporal in that club," explains SSGT (Ret.) Xavier. The success of the MacPherson Boys' Club spurred the creation of more clubs, including Geylang West Boys' Club, where he served as Secretary.

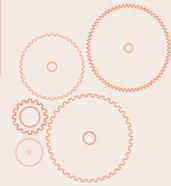
The Clubs took in boys aged 12 to 18 who were mostly school dropouts and juvenile delinquents who had a higher risk of being drawn into street corner gangs and a life of crime. The Clubs kept them busy with sports and other activities, and gave them the chance to learn to take responsibility for themselves and exercise leadership of their groups. The Police would liaise with the Ministry of Education and schools in the neighbourhood to identify at-risk boys. Police officers would then make house visits to speak with the boys and their families, explaining the rationale of the Boys' Clubs and encouraging the boys to join. "We told them that we were there to help out," says SSGT (Ret.) Xavier. "We explained to them that it's an

open-door concept. You can come in, and you can leave, any time you like."

He recalls one gratifying success story that touched him. Once, while he was out shopping with his wife at Parkway Parade, a young man called out to him: "Sir! Sir! How are you?" and came forward with two young children behind him. The young man was a former Boys' Club member whom SSGT (Ret.) Xavier had appointed as leader of a group named "Kingfisher". "So I said to him: 'Wah, must be your adik (Malay for younger sibling)?' He explained playfully: 'No lah, Sir, these are my son and daughter!' That's the one thing that sticks in your mind, that we, as police officers, have achieved something, that we have helped them, these former dropouts and delinquents, achieve success and start a family."

To help these boys, SSGT (Ret.) Xavier went beyond the call of duty – after pulling 12-hour shifts at the Boys' Clubs, he even invited them home for dinner on occasions. His mother-in-law would make a big pot of *nasi bryani*, and his wife and daughters would join in these gatherings. The women in his life went on to become active volunteers for a charity organisation that helps the disadvantaged. Now, his community work has also inspired his granddaughter Chloe: "I admire my grandparents a lot, and the things that they do for other people. They're really amazing."

## DUTY with a HUMAN TOUCH



► ASP (Ret.) Mohamed Ismail  
Ameer Batcha, Immigration  
& Checkpoints Authority

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



Assistant Superintendent (Retired) Mohamed Ismail Ameer Batcha joined the Immigration Department in 1966 as a Junior Officer and retired in 2008 after 42 years' service. He can recall clearly his very first day at work at Telok Ayer Basin, and still jokes about it: "I was on the pontoon at Prince Edward Road, excited about my new job because previously I was working as an office boy, and now I get a nice-sounding title!"

The call of duty took him out to sea much of the time. Officers had to take a smaller boat to the ships moored at a quarantine area some distance away from the shore, and had to jump from the gangway. If it was a tanker being inspected, officers had to climb up a steel ladder, carrying their bags of immigration stamps, which sometimes dropped into the sea. "You also had to be very alert that you don't fall yourself. I remember quite a few officers fell in, and one had to be saved by an American sailor."

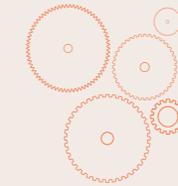
Another of his postings was to Paya Lebar Airport, where his job was to assist the Deputy Assistant Controllers to man the immigration counters and check that all passports were valid. "Back then, there was a black book that we had to go through, and we had to look through the list and be careful not to miss anything. Nowadays, you just press a button on a computer!" Paya Lebar Airport was much smaller than the Changi

Airport of today, with only four gates, and the arrival and departure halls shared the same transit area. "It was an interesting job, meeting many different people."

Passengers who could not enter Singapore sometimes had to wait up to a few days for the next flight back. When the airlines did not provide enough food, there were occasions where ASP (Ret.) Mohd Ismail would go out of his way to get meals, and even money, for these stranded passengers. Some wrote to him later to thank him. There was a case that involved repatriation with the help of the United Nations. "Whatever reason they are refused entry is another issue. As fellow human beings, if you feel that another person is hungry and needs food, then we should buy them food."

ASP (Ret.) Mohd Ismail continued to study part-time and upgrade his qualifications, and in 1984, became one of the first two Junior Officers from the Immigration Department to enter the Senior Officer scheme, a manpower milestone that was reported in the newspapers. After his promotion, his role as a Duty Officer and Team Leader at Airport Command meant that he often had to make difficult decisions on the spot about cases such as forged passports. "You cannot pass on your work to the next officer when your shift ends. The decision is yours to make." Once again, duty calls, but for ASP (Ret.) Mohd Ismail, always with a human touch.

## RUNNING the RACE TOGETHER



► COL Daniel Seet,  
Singapore Civil  
Defence Force

Photo: Singapore  
Civil Defence Force



One would expect the Commander of the largest Division in the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) to face many challenges, especially those related to fostering the Home Team's core value of unity, as shown in exemplary teamwork. For Colonel Daniel Seet, 37, one major demand that he faces is the need to juggle between the many meetings he had to attend and making time to engage all the personnel working at the 1st SCDF Division Headquarters as well as those from all the Division's fire stations. As the unit commander, he had to maintain constant contact with the emergency responders in order to be able to share with them his thoughts about operations, expectations and goals for the Division to grow as a cohesive responding unit.

With the large size of the Division, simply trying to build camaraderie among the emergency responders from the fire stations was in itself a huge undertaking. "This also brought about other attendant challenges such as communicating policies initiated by SCDF HQ, and making sure that the emergency responders understood how and why major organisational decisions were made, and to solicit their feedback because I wanted to make sure they felt they had a stake in the process."

Fortunately, he thinks, the 1st SCDF Division's regular share of major annual events to prepare for, such as the Shangri-La Dialogue, the National Day Parade and the Formula 1 Grand Prix race, served to gel the team as a tight "fighting" unit. "Although these operations required hard work and sacrifices from our emergency responders, they also served as rallying points that kept the men on

mission and purpose." Every team member was focused on the mission of fulfilling their duty as part of the Home Team, and to contribute to the ultimate purpose of maintaining the nation's safety and security.

Together with his senior management team, he took advantage of the critical mass of emergency responders at the fire stations to organise mass participation programmes that would bring people together, not just for the fun of it, but also to build a sense of belonging and to forge the belief that, as one family, his units would be able to overcome any challenge. One memorable programme was in 2014 – the 100,000km running challenge that rallied everyone across the Division to keep a record of their running mileage for that year, and collectively, try to cross the target mark together. The management team ran frequently with the emergency responders from all fire stations. Over time, emergency responders also organised runs on their own. "Every visit to the fire stations for a run was also an opportunity for dialogue, and this was especially helpful in creating an informal atmosphere where views could be shared. It was really an awesome moment when we finally managed to smash the target by end-2014."

On a daily basis, the chief motivation for COL Seet is that there is something very energising in being part of a fraternity that has noble shared values and goals. "Despite our hard work ... the reward was in seeing everyone come together to get the job done. I think we all thrive on this in one way or another in the emergency services – our sense of shared mission is very strong and that is a very powerful thing."

# EQUAL

opportunity to

# SHINE



► AC Julia Sng Gek Lian,  
Immigration &  
Checkpoints Authority

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



There was no glass ceiling to smash in the case of Assistant Commissioner Julia Sng Gek Lian, 46, the first female Commander of a checkpoint and one of the first female Directors (Director, Corporate Communications in 2004) at the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA). She believes that equal opportunities are given to all officers at ICA, regardless of gender. "At the first starting point when we joined ICA, all of us undergo the same training programme. There are no concessions given to female officers. Upon completion of the training programme, all officers are deployed to checkpoints where they are given equal opportunities to undertake a spectrum of roles in identification and border security. Everyone is assessed based on work performance, not gender."

This meritocratic approach to staff development, she adds, will continue into officers' future postings. She is sure that aspiring ICA officers can look forward to a career where their vigilance and contribution can make a difference to Singapore's safety and security.

Having served as Commander Airport since June 2013, she has seen how Changi Airport has experienced significant growth in passenger volume through the years. In 2014, ICA officers at Changi Airport cleared a total of 44.6 million passengers. This was an increase of 25 per cent compared to the 33.5 million passengers in 2010. Along with these changes, ICA officers have had to deal with rising traveller expectations as well as a constantly

evolving security climate, she observes. "While many Singaporeans look forward eagerly to the holiday seasons or long weekends, our officers have worked tirelessly round the clock during peak periods to ensure effective and efficient clearance of both passengers and baggage through our air checkpoint."

Her role as Commander is to ensure that every ICA officer at Airport Command remains vigilant and well-prepared to meet the ongoing challenges. "We meet these challenges as a team, supporting one another and actively communicating workplace concerns among all ranks." Her most memorable moments as Commander Airport include the times when the contributions of ICA's Specialists were recognised. From June 2014 to 2015, four Senior Checkpoint Inspectors were promoted to the rank of Inspector. A Staff Sergeant won the Changi Airport Group's outstanding staff and ICA's WOW awards. These awards recognised excellent attitude and assistance rendered on separate occasions to passengers in need of assistance. "These are testimonies to both the dedication shown by these officers as well as ICA's commitment to continually develop every officer to their fullest potential. I am very proud of these officers."

Her favourite part of the job is getting her "daily dose of positive energy" from interacting with her officers. "From the veterans, they have a wealth of tacit knowledge to impart, while from the young officers, their high energy and innovative minds are a source of inspiration."

# SERVING

# SINGAPORE

far from

# HOME



► CI2 Md Jalalludin bin Juki,  
Immigration &  
Checkpoints Authority

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



For Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) officer Checkpoint Inspector 2 Md Jalalludin bin Juki, 47, going out of his way to help others made for some good memories of working overseas. Seconded to the Singapore Consulate in Chennai, India from 1999 to 2001, in his consular work, he was once required to attend to the repatriation of the body of a deceased Singaporean. The deceased was a Muslim and his family wanted to have him back in Singapore for burial within 24 hours of his passing. He recalls: "The arrangements were very challenging, as I had to very quickly liaise with many agencies – the airlines, police, health authorities, Customs, etc – all within a few hours."

He remembers this incident particularly well because his wife and child had just joined him after his move to India. He was about to take them around Chennai, but felt that it was more important to help the family of the deceased Singaporean first. "I had all the time thereafter to help my family settle down to life in India."

He also had the chance to be the first ICA Specialist to be posted to the Singapore mission in Yangon, Myanmar in 2011. His job was to receive and process visa applications for Myanmar and other foreign nationals who required a visa to visit Singapore, as well as immigration and consular assistance to Singaporeans in distress such as those who had lost their Singapore passports. He would liaise with ICA Headquarters to verify their identity and issue them a Document of Identity for their onward journey back to Singapore.

Sometimes, he had to conduct thorough investigations on suspected fraudulent visa applications by verifying information submitted, with the companies and their Directors whose company letterheads were submitted as supporting documents. He also had to verify with airlines when e-tickets were suspected to be forged. Fact-finding interviews were then conducted with the applicants. "Good teamwork with colleagues and local staff who became our translators was important in getting things done quickly and efficiently. Being able to empathise with Singaporeans' anxiety over losing their passports often helped to calm them down. We were then able to gather the necessary facts of the case and documents quickly for the verification of the identity of the persons and assist them."

Once, he led his visa team to assist the members of a distraught Myanmar family who were facing a medical emergency. Although it would normally have taken four working days to issue a visa, he and his team worked through lunch to secure and issue the visas to the family in time for them to catch a flight to Singapore on the same day. "It was immensely comforting when we received a 'Thank You' card informing us that the patient's operation had gone well."

While in Myanmar, he also had the chance to be part of an ASEAN observation team during Myanmar's by-elections in 2012, and to be the Singapore Embassy's representative to ensure the national sailing team's security during the SEA Games in Myanmar in 2013.

# STAYING COOL

in the heat of

# LITTLE INDIA

► DSP Ho See Ying,  
Singapore Police Force

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



The Little India riot in 2013 is the most memorable incident so far in the career of Deputy Superintendent Ho See Ying, 29. Her abiding memory of the incident was trying to stay cool in the heat of the moment, amidst the first street riot in Singapore since 1969. In fact, it was her experience as a contingency planner at the Operations Department that helped her formulate plans quickly and thoroughly, and manage her operational role well. "I had to think through worst-case scenarios and quickly craft contingency response plans."

DSP Ho, Commanding Officer of Rochor Neighbourhood Police Centre, looks after the deployment and welfare of about 120 officers. She had to call upon this extensive experience of management and leadership when she was informed of the incident at about 10pm that night and rushed down to the location immediately. When she arrived at Race Course Road, she was greeted by a chaotic scene. "There was a group of police officers with helmets and shields, but the rioters far outnumbered the police officers. Events developed very quickly. Instinctively, I shouted at the shopkeepers and members of the public who gathered at the shophouses along Race Course Road to leave or to close the shutters of their units, as I was worried that they would become the next victims of the rioters." She could see immediately that the situation required more manpower and quickly activated her officers from the Crime Strike Force.

After the Special Operations Command forces had managed to disperse the rioters, she was tasked with the deployment of plainclothes officers to round up the rioters

who might have escaped and been hiding in the back lanes. She then had to supervise the conduct of high-visibility patrols to restore public confidence, as well as the early morning deployment of Community Policing officers before the morning crowd came in. "The adrenaline from dispersing the rioters was still pumping in my veins and I had to calm myself down and quickly formulate the deployment plans," she says, giving a glimpse into the quick thinking and firm decisiveness that was demanded of her that night.

Her actions then were mostly instinctive, she shares, drawing upon her deep sense of duty to protect the wellbeing of the people.

Her instincts were also focused by a sense of the importance of giving clear directions – a precondition for the much larger eventual benefit of national stability. "What kept me going through these challenges was the need to set a good example and provide good guidance to officers under my charge. If a leader is not able to instil confidence and exhibit certainty of decisions, officers will not have the confidence to carry out directions given."

About 50 plainclothes officers had been recalled and had reported at Rochor NPC. DSP Ho knew she had to deliver a coherent briefing to these officers and communicate to them their mission for the immediate aftermath, with detailed and succinct directions. "While I was feeling the stress of the task and the enormity of the events that had just occurred, I asked myself what were the most important tasks at hand and what must be achieved through our actions for the Singapore Police Force to instil confidence in our citizens."

# DOING the RIGHT THING

► LTA Tiffany Neo,  
Singapore Civil  
Defence Force

Photo: Singapore  
Civil Defence Force



Going by the rule-book is a norm that training drums into officers. But there are occasions that call for something more. This was the test for Lieutenant Tiffany Neo, 27, being the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) ground commander at the Little India riot of 8 December 2013.

Her first thoughts were mainly focused on the task at hand and making sure of the safety of her team. There were moments during the operation when she felt a great sense of awe for her Home Team colleagues in their ability to work together in overcoming adversity.

Her team of five men, the first responding crew, included three full-time National Servicemen who had never seen a dead body. "It was an extremely unfamiliar and highly dynamic situation. There were no exact standard operating procedures (SOPs) that we could abide by. On top of that, many things did not go as expected. It was an incredibly noisy and hostile environment, with emotions running high and wild, and projectiles flying in all directions towards us."

Now a Senior Trainer at the Civil Defence Academy, LTA Neo noted that SCDF emergency responders are always imbued with the importance of abiding by SOPs. "However, our training and exercises have also taught us another important lesson, and that is to recognise that every operation is unique and to expect the unexpected that requires split-second decision-making in mitigating

challenges." Under the operating environment of the riot, she broke protocol by putting a body in an ambulance. "I knew I had to do that because it was my utmost priority to protect the body of the deceased from the projectiles. At such times, the situation warrants you to not blindly adhere to the SOPs but be guided by common sense and rational thinking."

What motivated her was the intuition to want to bring relief and closure to those affected by the unfortunate events that had taken place. "In a situation like this, it is your mind and heart and your training that would tell you to do the right thing." To her, the operation was a testimony to how much the different Home Team departments had to leverage on one another to work in a concerted effort to overcome challenges to accomplish the mission, regardless of how complicated that mission was.

Helping others was the kind of spirit that she already had even before joining SCDF. "Once, I helped a motorcyclist who skidded on the expressway and broke his arm. I was there with him until the arrival of the emergency ambulance." Now, one of her aspirations is that, a decade from now, Singapore would become a Nation of Lifesavers where, during an emergency, members of the community would promptly render assistance to those in need of help, SOP or no SOP. "I believe we are moving in that direction, as we are seeing more and more such good Samaritans in our midst."

# SERVING the NATION with PRIDE

► SGT (NS) Abdul Haqqim bin Abdul Hasim, Singapore Police Force

Photo: Home Team Academy



For Sergeant (NS) Abdul Haqqim bin Abdul Hasim of the Singapore Police Force's (SPF) Special Operations Command (SOC), the most memorable experience of his National Service is not an operational experience but being given the privilege of being part of the Police Guard-of-Honour contingent for the National Day Parade (NDP) in 2013. This was during his basic trainee days. Many hours were spent on marching practice, but to him, it was all worth it. "I was very honoured to have participated in the NDP. I felt a sense of belonging when I sang the National Anthem out loud on the day itself. It made me very proud to be a Singaporean."

Doing something worthwhile for the nation is what motivates SGT (NS) Abdul Haqqim, 22. While basic training is onerous for most trainees, it was the "favourite part" of his service. "Even though we struggled at the start, we succeeded as a squad in the end. It was nice to see some of our squad mates motivating one another during our training. We were extremely pleased when all of us passed with at least a Silver award for our Individual Physical Proficiency Test (IPPT)."

SGT (NS) Abdul's main task is to patrol sensitive areas such as the Central Business District (CBD) and Tuas and

Woodlands Checkpoints to deter potential threats. He has to stay alert and vigilant during such patrols.

He was involved in the Little India riot in 2013, as part of the frontline SOC troopers deployed to hold the line and prevent the rioters from causing any more chaos. When his troop was first activated, he thought it was a routine dry run practice to ensure that he and his fellow officers remained alert and vigilant during their 24-hour duty. But all that changed when his Officer-in-Charge (OC) briefed them about the chaotic situation at Race Course Road. "Once we arrived at the scene, all the unease I felt dissipated as I felt a strong urge to protect and defend my nation from disorder."

As the situation was very chaotic on the ground, it was difficult to hear some of the commands from his OC. "We managed to overcome the difficulty by disseminating the information across the troops in an orderly manner."

"What kept me going during the riot were my loved ones. It was my sense of duty to protect my friends and family that enabled me to quell the situation. I realised that we, police officers, both regulars and NSFs, have a significant role to play alongside other national defence forces to ensure the safety and peace of Singapore."

# HUMAN COHESION in TIMES of CRISIS

► LTC (NS) Mohan Tiruchittapalam, Singapore Civil Defence Force

Photo: Singapore Civil Defence Force



A Home Team representative far outside Singapore, Assistant Professor Lieutenant Colonel (NS) Mohan Tiruchittapalam, 49, has seen a fair bit of the world during his service. His overseas Operation Lionheart missions include destinations such as Phuket, Thailand after the 2004 Asian tsunami; Northern Pakistan in 2005 after the South Asian earthquake; Central Java, Indonesia after the 2006 quake; and Christchurch, New Zealand after the 2011 quake.

He felt first-hand and up close the tremendous impact of the forces of Nature, that called on the power of the human spirit in response. In Phuket in 2004, he helped with more than 300 casualties from a remote village. In Christchurch, the first developed country he was deployed to in the aftermath of a disaster, he saw the power of human cohesion. "It was extremely touching to witness how the entire local community came together to support each other even if they were strangers."

LTC (NS) Mohan, an Assistant Professor and Emergency Physician at Changi General Hospital, leads the Singapore Civil Defence Force's (SCDF) medical team to provide emergency resuscitation and stabilisation of victims. The team has to achieve a lot with very little. "We play an important role in alleviating the suffering of the casualties. Even if we are faced with a shortage of medical supplies, we must never compromise on our duty to provide medical assistance." During such crunch times, the team always works closely with the affected countries to leverage any resources they have. They also improvise with what is already on hand and creatively source for what is lacking.

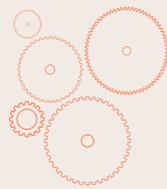
Drawing on their diplomacy and other people skills, building good working relationships with other Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams from other countries is also very helpful. "We help each other too when we are in need of more medical supplies, staff and information. I must say that the desire and urgency to want to help alleviate someone's suffering is part of the DNA of anyone in the medical profession."

There were numerous times when he and his team followed the SCDF's elite Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (DART) members into small and dark confined places to treat patients. "The one big lesson I have learnt from Operation Lionheart missions is to do more with less, and always remain extremely agile and mobile." As Singapore has always been very safe and secure, Singaporeans have been fortunate not to frequently experience mass incidents. Hence, lessons from Operation Lionheart missions serve as a continuous reminder of the need to always be trained and prepared to deal with any catastrophic incident.

For the SCDF team, one very important quality is patience. "As a medical professional, it is important to know that not everyone is able to work at your speed or know as much as you do. Your area of speciality may not be something that other people share." The determination to get the job done is another key attribute that emergency responders must possess. He saw how the elite SCDF DART members spent hours trying to manually cut through huge slabs of concrete under the hot sun, to get closer to a trapped victim. "Even if you are physically and mentally tired, it is crucial to pull up every bit of strength you have to ensure that the job gets done. It's a matter of life and death here!"

Using technology to

# FIGHT DRUGS



► SUPT Saherly bin Limat,  
Central Narcotics Bureau

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



Applying technology in the war on drugs is Superintendent I Saherly bin Limat's way of contributing to the work of the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB). Currently the Commanding Officer (CO) of CNB Enforcement "F" Division, SUPT Saherly, 42, is glad to have been able to work with technology at CNB. He was the Senior Officer-in-Charge (SOC) of the CNB Woodlands Team from 2010 to 2013, where he actively trawled the internet in search of technologies that could help with their work, in his efforts to improve the working conditions of his officers at Woodlands Checkpoint.

Some examples of technology that he has come across, and which have been adopted at the Bureau level, are the CT-30 compendium of tools and the TruNarc, a handheld analyser. The CT-30 is a kit containing many tools to assist in vehicular searches including a density meter to check for hidden contraband items in the hollow of vehicle panels. The TruNarc assists in identifying known drugs from unknown substances that are seized.

He recalls one case in particular, that showed clearly how TruNarc allowed CNB officers to perform their role at the checkpoint while minimising inconvenience to the public. A female subject had been stopped for checks. A packet of white powder was recovered from her purse which she claimed to be some kind of charm. Under normal circumstances, the substance would have to be sent to the Health Sciences Authority for analysis and she would

have to be released on bail pending the analysis. With the TruNarc, within minutes, the substance was verified to be just powdered naphthalene and she was allowed to continue her journey.

SUPT Saherly had always wanted to combine his techie interest with giving back to the community. As a National University of Singapore undergraduate, he was a tutor for the Mendaki Weekend Tuition Scheme. His passion for technology and computers was then at a hobbyist level. "I thought, why not do something more for the Malay community instead of just tuition? The community was facing problems with drugs, so I made the decision to join CNB."

Today, seeing improvements in the working conditions of his officers keeps him going. "I may not be with them each time they are on the ground but they know that I am available to hear the issues they face and work on improving them. With their concerns being taken care of, the men are more willing to go the extra mile at work."

This priority area of his is guided by what Mr Azni Sarbini (former Deputy Director CNB) told him when he first joined CNB – that he had to give 100 per cent at work and 100 per cent at home. In line with this, his family – he has three young children – is his other motivation. "I feel that I am directly protecting them from harmful drugs by stopping drugs from coming into Singapore or by removing traffickers off the streets."

# BUILDING a SCHOOL inside the PRISONS



► SAC Goh Leng Chuang Terrence,  
Singapore Prison Service

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



Turning a prison into a school involves many cultural shifts. Senior Assistant Commissioner Goh Leng Chuang Terrence, who was the Superintendent tasked to set up the Kaki Bukit Centre/Prison School knows this better than most people. "Because I had benefited from the meritocratic system in Singapore, I have felt strongly since young that I should do my part to help the disadvantaged in society," says the former medical social worker at Woodbridge Hospital who has an honours degree in social work.

In the past, teachers from the Prison Education Branch had to travel to different prison institutions to teach, and could only reach out to a small number of motivated inmates who wanted to study. Teaching different subjects for a small group was not viable.

The planning team worked day and night to bounce ideas and to conceptualise the ideal prison culture, including relationships between staff and inmates, teachers, volunteers and external partners. The school management team of young prison officers with less than five years' experience each were not shackled by conventions and existing practices. "We were given the liberty to experiment with new ways of doing things. This was liberating and exhilarating. We had genuine fun." The only principal guidance given by former Director of Prisons Chua Chin Kiat was that the institution

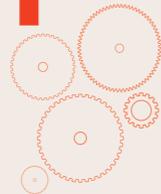
should have this aim: "School First, Prison Second".

Some practical changes made a lot of difference. For example, prisoners then were each addressed by a prison number printed on their T-shirts. Even prison staff had service numbers. With the Prison School, inmates' real names were printed on their T-shirts, together with their prison numbers. "This gave them back their dignity and identity, which we felt were important for rehabilitation. We were probably the first prison to start this practice."

For SAC Goh, 46, now Director (Operations) at Singapore Prison Service, what underlies his commitment to a rehabilitative approach is the belief that everyone needs second chances in life. "None of us is perfect. We all make mistakes in life." He himself has been given many second chances throughout his life, he says. One example is financial support from bursaries, given based on his financial needs when he was younger. Such support from the community enabled him to get a good education.

Also, in the workplace throughout his career, he has had many supportive supervisors. "Despite the honest mistakes I made, I was still given second chances. Such magnanimity inspires me to do the same – to accord second chances to people I work with or come across; not because they deserved it, but rather, often, they need the second chance to get on with their lives."

# TRAINING for UNITY



► Mr Domingo Molina Jr,  
Home Team Academy

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



When Mr Domingo Molina Jr, 56, joined the Home Team Academy (HTA) in 2006 after a career in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), he had to hit the ground running. He was given three months to design an overseas curriculum for an advanced course for senior officers in Australia and Vietnam. Hitting the ground running is also what HTA's training aims to equip officers to do once they graduate.

Mr Domingo, a Senior Trainer and Senior Assistant Director of the Joint Operations Training Centre, is constantly looking out for, and implementing, new teaching methods. In addition to delivering lectures and running seminars, he spends a lot of time on facilitating learning, giving ownership to students in their sharing of ideas, views, opinions and comments. Peer learning among his students also plays an important part, especially in sharing experience from the ground, to flesh out and back up learning points from more theoretical perspectives. Aside from his own personal pride, a key motivation for him is contributing to maintaining the Academy's reputation.

Planning the curriculum, especially for joint operations training, has become much more complicated, especially in recent years, given the developments in the security environment both in Singapore and internationally. A lot more focus nowadays is placed on developing training scenarios for VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) conditions, and to think out of the box especially on potential threats. Another key consideration

is to ensure that training cuts across as many Home Team Departments as possible. This multidisciplinary approach will help realise the Home Team's core value of "unity".

Using different scenarios in training aims to develop skills in imagining the most seemingly impossible or unlikely situations. Hence, perhaps paradoxically, to keep the training as realistic as possible, more virtual methods are being used, such as table-top exercises, role play and gaming. Such more advanced techniques and equipment allow for hypothetical situations and conditions to be simulated that would be difficult, even impossible, to replicate in reality – a mass destruction scenario, for example.

What Mr Domingo finds most gratifying is when he can see in his students the embodiment of the Home Team spirit. "You see this when you see them interacting with one another from the other Home Team Departments, asking questions, being eager to find out what the others do, and being willing to share and having a very good understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the other Home Team Departments".

The one key lesson he hopes his students will take away with them is the importance of working as a team, understanding each other's strengths and limitations, and complementing each other, turning limitations into strengths. "No one is indispensable. While each department has its own mission and roles, there is a need to work jointly or as a multi-agency force to overcome a problem or crisis."

# A PARADIGM SHIFT for REHAB



► SCW Yeo Kee Siang,  
Singapore Prison Service

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



Some say that a prison job is mundane. But Senior Chief Warden I Yeo Kee Siang, 44, of the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) disagrees. "Even within the four walls, I was rotated to cover different hall duties and was once assigned to be a workshop supervisor in the prison institutions. There are not only ground work areas but also special operations and staff duties such as being a programme officer, provost, intelligence officer, visit officer and so on."

SPS, he adds, is also moving beyond the prison walls. Aftercare officers in the community help ex-offenders to reintegrate with their families and society. Indeed, his most fulfilling task was to help in the setting-up and implementation of the Community Rehabilitation Centre (CRC), a step-down facility for male first-timer drug offenders aged 16 to 21. As part of the recommendations from the Taskforce on Drug Abuse, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) endorsed measures to improve upstream interventions for young drug abusers. "It was a more transformative approach. For me, it was a big paradigm shift."

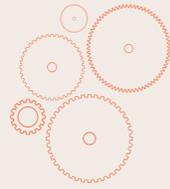
CRC aims to provide a structured programme that involves drug offenders' families to aid in their rehabilitation process. The residents in CRC are required to stay in most of the week, but are allowed to continue with their education or employment in the community in the day. This arrangement minimises the weakening of social bonds between residents and their families, and also

reduces disruptions to their lives. CRC also segregates these young abusers from other inmates to reduce the risk of negative influences.

The implementation team studied the operating guidelines in a collaborative manner with reference to other community residential settings. There was much discussion on what a feasible approach would be. The initial plans, policies and systems were tested continually. "I enjoyed seeing the birth of the CRC from nothing to being fully operational. The current procedures are robust and smoother now," he says.

The focus on rehabilitation and reintegration has moved a long way from the tougher old-school approach to treating offenders. This shift may be connected with the way that officers like SCW Yeo have themselves been treated and mentored in their own workplace development. He recounts an incident in his early years of service, when he had to perform a muster check and could not tally the figures. After 20 minutes of trying, his shift supervisor came, and told him to be calm and to recheck, and gave a few pointers. All the time, his supervisor was beside him, coaching him. "I learnt the hard way but he supported me. He explained to the management about my situation. He taught me how to troubleshoot real-time problems which were not always taught in class. He taught me not to panic but to remain calm when I am faced with a difficult situation." For SCW Yeo, this reinforced his impression of SPS as a challenging yet supportive organisation.

# TOWARDS SELF- RELIANCE



► SSGT Akhbar Shah bin Hamid,  
Singapore Prison Service

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



As a Reintegration Officer at the Community Rehabilitation Centre (CRC), Staff Sergeant Akhbar Shah's job during the residential stay phase at CRC is to provide operations, administrative and logistics support to the managing agent running the CRC. During the home leave phase, his responsibilities are to source for assistance or support systems required, to ensure that supervision conditions are abided by, and to monitor progress. What keeps him going is the management's support, understanding from supervisors and the readily available support systems.

SSGT Akhbar shared that aftercare work brings with it some personal challenges. Most of his supervisees come from broken or dysfunctional families, and would not have been provided with a proper upbringing. "My most challenging role is to convince the residents and their families on the importance of education and of being self-sufficient, so that they will become independent and not be reliant on others in the future." This role may seem simple but it actually takes a lot of patience, determination, persistence and, most importantly, belief in the work. It is not easy to help the supervisees with their schooling or work, and to build up their confidence to go on. "They

give up easily because they are not used to this kind of discipline and lifestyle."

Working with the supervisees' families can be just as challenging, in some ways. Once, a CRC resident failed to return to the CRC after work. SSGT Akhbar found out that the resident had left his workplace as usual, so he called his brother. His brother was furious, initially blaming the CRC staff for not looking after him, but agreed to assist after SSGT Akhbar reasoned with him and calmed him down. His brother finally managed to convince the supervisee to return to the CRC. After SSGT Akhbar's counselling, his family eventually agreed that he would benefit from staying in CRC.

Most of the supervisees' parents themselves need assistance in areas such as finance and employment. Meetings with the residents and their families are normally conducted after working hours due to their tight schedules. But such meetings are important as they allow for discussions on issues that hinder the families from moving forward and leading normal lives. "I am always reminded of how fortunate I am compared to my supervisees, who have to go through their lives without basic necessities. The belief that I am doing something meaningful is what keeps me going."

# ADDING the HUMAN TOUCH



► A/INSP Siti Fatimah  
binti Abdullah,  
Singapore Police Force

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



Going the extra mile for the public makes work fulfilling for Acting Inspector Siti Fatimah binti Abdullah, 29. Having been with the Traffic Police for 11 years, she has served as a Patrol Officer, Assistant Planning Officer, and Deputy Officer-in-Charge of a General Investigations Team in the Investigation Branch. It is the satisfaction derived from the smiles and words of gratitude from those she has helped, as well as the recognition from supervisors and colleagues, that motivates her to step out of her comfort zone to serve the public and the organisation better.

A/INSP Siti grew up wanting to be a teacher but changed her mind when she saw her friends enlisting in the Singapore Police Force (SPF) for National Service. "They shared their very interesting experiences and it spurred me to join the SPF to do my part for the community and the country. I wanted to have my share of courageous and life-saving stories to tell my children and grandchildren in time to come. I also realised that being in this organisation, you would have your fair share of teaching and mentoring new officers to give of their best. I am realising my childhood dream whilst embarking on a remarkable journey of an extraordinary career."

One of the greatest challenges in her work is to meet the expectations of the public, to maintain their confidence in the SPF while fulfilling her core duties. "To gain the public's understanding, we need to take time to continuously engage them to appreciate their concerns, and build trust. It is important to add the human touch to listen and empathise with their plight."

Once, during her days as a Patrol Officer, A/INSP Siti had to pacify a woman who was going through depression due to marital issues. The woman was driving under the influence of alcohol and had hit several vehicles along a busy stretch of road, following which she got injured and became hysterical. With patience and empathy, A/INSP Siti managed to gain her trust and she eventually agreed to board the ambulance in police custody.

While A/INSP Siti made it a point to stand firm to summon erroneous road-users, she also saw the need to spare a few minutes to listen to their reasons and understand their situation. The words of the American poet Maya Angelou will always be an abiding inspiration – "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but they will not forget how you made them feel."

# ALWAYS READY TASK

for the

► LTC (NS) Alvin Low,  
Singapore Civil Defence Force

Photo: Singapore  
Civil Defence Force



# A More ENGAGING and MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE

for PNSmen

► DSP (NS) Derrick Goh,  
Singapore Police Force

Recipient of the  
★2015 NSMAN OF  
THE YEAR AWARD

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



Lieutenant Colonel (NS) Alvin Low, 41, was Deputy Commander of the Singapore Civil Defence Force's (SCDF) Operation Lionheart Contingent of 76 members when it first attained the Heavy Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team classification in 2008, making Singapore the first in Asia to attain such a prestigious classification among organisations that work internationally on humanitarian causes such as peacekeeping and disaster relief. The reclassification exercise held in September 2013 is a requirement once every five years for all teams that have attained classification under INSARAG, the United Nations' International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, a global network of 80 countries.

During the 36-hour reclassification exercise, the SCDF contingent had to display the best of their efficiency and effectiveness, to demonstrate their activation, equipping and deployment procedures. "We had to race against the clock to search and rescue 'victims' trapped under collapsed buildings using different techniques, such as cutting and lifting, tunnelling and using life detectors and search dogs."

LTC (NS) Low, who works in the area of aerodrome safety in his civilian life, had to exercise leadership to ensure that the morale of the contingent members was held up high, despite the physical and psychological demands of their work. "The lack of sleep during the prolonged exercise, coupled with physical hard work and constant exposure to operational risks, was a challenge. Hence, it was important for the contingent members to always stay motivated, focused and physically and mentally prepared for the worst-

case exercise scenarios and injects."

The team's camaraderie, perseverance and "never give up" spirit were what kept him going. "Time is precious when saving lives. Always be prepared for the challenges ahead. When there is a task at hand, stay focused and complete each mission as swiftly and professionally as possible." Prior to the reclassification exercise, he and his team attended several briefings to better understand the possible scenarios for which they would be assessed. He always knew they were up to the task. "We are always prepared to respond to overseas emergencies and humanitarian missions due to the nature of our work in the SCDF."

For LTC (NS) Low, in his service as a citizen member of the Home Team, there is a very close connection between the personal and the professional. As a husband to his wife and father to his son, he knows it is important for his family to always stay safe and secure. "I am sure the same philosophy applies for all families in Singapore. As a member of the Home Team, I have the privilege of playing an instrumental role in keeping Singapore safe and secure, of enabling families in Singapore to lead their daily lives without having to fear for their safety and security, and knowing that, should disaster strike, we have a team of SCDF professionals trained and ready to respond."

To future generations of SCDF NSmen, he has a message of self-sacrifice and service. As he says: "You have a vital role to play in keeping Singapore safe. Move out of your comfort zone and challenge yourselves to attain greater heights. Most importantly, always remember to stay true to your noble calling of saving lives and property."

Dealing with the dark side of life came hand in hand with the learning opportunities to conduct research and prepare policies for Deputy Superintendent (NS) Derrick Goh, 47, now a senior bank executive. During his stint at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), he accompanied a regular officer colleague, senior investigator Ng Chee Kok from the Special Investigation Section to see the famed forensic pathologist Professor Chao Tzee Cheng at the mortuary. "I can still remember the smell from the corpses!"

Another exciting exposure during his stint at the CID were the raids on gambling and vice houses. "It was a darker side of society that I never knew existed." DSP (NS) Goh joined the raids by specialist units to learn the workings on the ground so he would be able to prepare sharper research papers and help his supervisors formulate better policies. "I observed good ground execution. The key to a successful raid was good analysis and research, enabling our officers to take advantage of the surprise element so as to secure the right evidence."

After returning from work stints in London and New York, DSP (NS) Goh continued his reservist duties at "G" Division where he is currently the Deputy NS Commander. "This time, the role is different albeit with less adrenaline but no less important. As an NS operational frontline unit, we shoulder the responsibility of leading the security coverage of key events such as the Geylang Bazaar as well as complementing our regular counterparts on key initiatives such as Ops Blue Mesh as well as major national events such as the Southeast Asian (SEA) Games, to name a few."

He added, "Given that these initiatives happen throughout the year, it helps significantly that we are a closely knit NS leadership team at "G" Division. As we each have full-time jobs,

everyone chips in to supervise the execution along with the strong support from our Divisional PNS Office and that from our regular counterparts."

Managing the Geylang Bazaar is a key operational event for PNSmen in "G" Division as they are fully in charge of the operation, including ground deployment. This was made possible due to the trust and confidence gained from its regular counterparts over the years. Operation Blue Mesh is another key event at "G" Division that spans over the calendar year. PNSmen are deployed in operations to support their regular counterparts in managing the law and order situation at Geylang. PNS officers continually make good arrests on offences such as the possession and sale of contraband cigarettes, public gaming and immigration offences.

The key to good execution starts with ensuring that our men are operationally ready. So together with his colleagues, DSP (NS) Goh focuses on honing key aspects of NS life to optimise their effort in policing work. This will make the NS experience and contribution to our nation more meaningful – a key thrust of the new PNS Master Plan. A critical element that is on trial is the streamlining of NS recalls to include operational and training requirements. For example, IPPT tests will be conducted during the 14 days when PNSmen report for duties so as to reduce the number of recalls for PNSmen.

"Many of us never thought we would be policemen when we grew up. It's a calling. PNSmen will meet the higher expectations with the greater responsibilities entrusted to them – they are a passionate lot," said DSP (NS) Goh. "On a personal note, it has been an exhilarating journey for me. I've learnt a lot during my NS stint and have picked up skills that have been applicable to my work life. I am a better person for this experience."

# BEYOND TEAMWORK

– Mutual care



► SGT (NS) Muhd Feroz bin Muhd Shaffarudin, Singapore Civil Defence Force

Photo: Singapore Civil Defence Force



# ONE TEAM, ONE MISSION

► AC Ong Choon Beng, Immigration & Checkpoints Authority

Photo: Singapore Police Force



There is teamwork, and there is teamwork. The quality of teamwork that Sergeant (NS) Muhd Feroz bin Muhd Shaffarudin, 21, experienced in the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) was one that was also full of mutual care. “Teamwork is crucial when we are up against a challenge. It is not just about working together to achieve a common goal. It is also equally important for each team member to take care of one another even during the most dangerous times.”

This lesson of life was what he took away from firefighting incidents, such as at the Little India riot in 2013, during his full-time National Service (NS). Caring is part of the SCDF DNA, embedded in its core values of “Pride and Care” – taking pride in what they do and caring for each other and the people they serve. This sums up the values and qualities of an emergency responder simply yet profoundly.

SGT (NS) Feroz was only one month into being a full-time NS Section Commander at the Central Fire Station when he was called out to the Little India riot. After assessing the situation, his team used rescue equipment to lift the rear left wheel of the bus to extricate a deceased man. While they were at work, the crowd started to swell. Suddenly, some of them started throwing projectiles at the SCDF officers. “The crowd reacted like a bear with a sore head. ... The greatest challenge was to stay focused and

be task-oriented even as we were being pelted with rocks, beer bottles and even curry packets. It was definitely a test of our professionalism to ensure that we protect the integrity of the body of the deceased even in the most hostile environment.”

As the crowd grew rowdier over time, the officers from SCDF had to ensure that they worked closely as a team and watched each other’s back at all cost. “Looking back, I am extremely proud of the team for being able to withstand the severe challenges that we faced. ... I will always remember how we took care of each other despite the dangers unfolding before us. I would not want Singapore to ever go through this kind of unfortunate event.”

Another lesson that he has taken away from NS is the need to be decisive. “As an emergency responder, I was tasked to deal with time-sensitive and life-and-death cases all the time. My NS experience has definitely imbued in me the ability to think swiftly but rationally before acting. These lessons are also very applicable to my daily life.”

The favourite part of his NS stint in the SCDF was to serve as a frontline emergency responder in providing relief to those in distress. “Who would have thought that a 19-year-old would be entrusted with the responsibility to put out raging infernos, rescue the injured and distressed, and operate in unexpected and treacherous environments?”

Assistant Commissioner Ong Choon Beng, 42, has the distinction since January 2015 of being the first Land Domain Commander for the Integrated Checkpoints Command (ICC), a new system of organising command of Home Team forces at the checkpoints according to Land, Sea and Air Domains. On his appointment, he says: “I see it as an honour and a privilege to work with the 2,500 Home Team officers who brave the frontlines at our land checkpoints every day and who dedicate their lives to keeping Singapore safe and secure.”

Being the first Domain to start the ICC, it had to find its own way forward. “There was no roadmap to follow or well-trodden path for us to take. We had to blaze a trail and chart our own way based on what we felt would be best for our Domain and our officers, anchored by our experience and our instincts.” He spent a lot of time talking to officers, to understand the issues that confronted them and prevented them from being more integrated prior to the ICC, so that they could improve on these areas and address them more holistically and effectively.

With the ICC, AC Ong finds that the Home Team at the land checkpoints has become more coordinated and integrated. Officers communicate more seamlessly, respond faster to incidents, address them more comprehensively

and make decisions more effectively. All the officers from several different departments can now work as a team with a shared goal. “The officers on the ground know that their fellow ICC officers will cover their backs and will be there to help each other because we are all in this together.”

His most memorable experience of his time as Domain Commander was during the first month of implementation, when an ICC officer from CNB went over to him and shared that he felt that the ICC really worked. The officer said he knew he and his team were not alone in their fight against drugs and there were many ICC officers who were there to support and help him in his work, since they all shared a common mission. “He told me he was happy with the ICC, as he felt good and proud to be part of the larger Land Domain team. ... I found that incident meaningful and encouraging because it meant that our ICC implementation efforts were heading in the right direction and had made a difference.”

His favourite part about his job is making his rounds at the land checkpoints. “It gives me a chance to see our ICC officers in action working together, and provides me an opportunity to engage and understand them, appreciate their challenges and, more importantly, hear from them how we can improve things and do better together.”

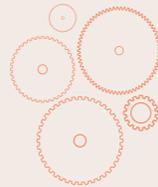
# Volunteers At Home

The Home Team's work would not be complete without the community, and a vital component of the community are its volunteers, who have served simply because they feel it is their duty as citizens to do so. To keep Singapore safe and secure, many people have stepped forward, and have sacrificed many, many hours – even years – of their time and effort to serve in various capacities. Collectively, many lifetimes of family and personal time have been invested – with never any regret or complaint – for the intangible, unseen benefit of serving a larger cause and the deep satisfaction that comes with it.

The Volunteer Special Constabulary, for decades, was the most visible aspect of citizen contribution – until they did so well that their uniforms were standardised, so that one could no longer distinguish them from the regulars. For some volunteers, their giving of their service is preventive and pre-emptive, dedicated to posterity and educating the next and future generations. Whether it was to boost awareness of fire safety or the menace of drug abuse, their primary motivation was nothing more than the wellbeing of their fellow men. For other volunteers, service is a spiritual calling. The benefit they bring is not only in this mortal existence – for instance, to give those who have taken missteps in life a second chance to rejoin society – but also respite and relief even into the hereafter.



## The EPITOME of COMMUNITY POLICING



► AC (V) (Ret.) S Lakshmanan,  
Volunteer Special Constabulary,  
Singapore Police Force

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



It was a “happy moment” for 57-year-old Assistant Commissioner (V) (Retired) S Lakshmanan when he was recognised for his dedicated service as a volunteer policeman. After serving his term as a Constable in the Singapore Police Force (SPF), he went on to join the Volunteer Special Constabulary (VSC) in 1994. He eventually retired in 2014 as the longest-serving Commander of the VSC.

It was during his tenure as Commander VSC that the Commissioner of Police decided to remove the “V” collar badge and name tag worn by VSC officers, and allowed volunteer officers and National Servicemen to wear the normal police collar badge and name tag, to recognise that they were just as capable of doing the job. In truth, volunteers undergo the same training as regulars, except for on-scene investigation, as they do not have to testify in court. Volunteer officers help in preserving the crime scene and cordoning off the area, but do not actually collect evidence.

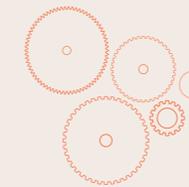
One of his career highlights is the 2006 International Monetary Fund-World Bank event which took place in Singapore. Almost 10,000 officers – National Servicemen, regulars and volunteers – were deployed for this mammoth operation. Volunteers were not deployed according to their normal routine. It was a 10-day event, so they were asked to choose to work for three, five, seven or all 10 days.

AC (V) (Ret.) Lakshmanan went around mobilising volunteers, going round to all the units, doing road shows, asking officers to commit their time. And they did, with the majority signing up for five days, and almost a third for the full 10 days. “The volunteers saw that the SPF needed them, and the officers came forward readily, and that was quite uplifting for me.” They actually took leave from their normal jobs to support the Police mission.

Like their regular counterparts, volunteer officers contribute not only to police work, but also to the community. For example, they helped to organise football games for at-risk youngsters in the former Boys’ Club, and for the Singapore Aftercare Association (SACA), which helps look after the children of ex-offenders.

His greatest satisfaction from volunteering is that as “we are making a major difference to the safety and security of Singapore as civilians, volunteer officers are actually the epitome of community policing in action. Everybody appreciates volunteers and they show it. I always tell the volunteers and others that volunteers are unpaid not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless. The satisfaction volunteers get is when they are respected and appreciated. I have treasured the years I have served as a VSC.”

## LASTING BOND of FRIENDSHIP



► AC (V) (Ret.) Chao Hick Tin,  
Volunteer Special Constabulary,  
Singapore Police Force

Photo: Singapore  
Police Force



Assistant Commissioner (V) (Retired) Chao Hick Tin, an appellate judge of the Supreme Court, was part of the Volunteer Special Constabulary (VSC) from Day One in 1967, and went on to serve for 20 years, the last six as Commander VSC. Reflecting on the two decades brought back fond memories for him. “There was the satisfaction of seeing a project successfully carried out and the lasting bond of friendship built among VSC volunteers.”

1967 was the year National Service was introduced for part-time police constables (referred to as “SCNS”), and AC (V) (Ret.) Chao joined many other young lawyers to respond to the call to provide training for the SCNS men in basic law, especially criminal law and evidence and procedure. Each volunteer lawyer was appointed as an Assistant Commandant with the rank of Honorary ASP. “It was unimaginable then that, 14 years later, I would be catapulted to the position of Commander of the VSC.”

In 1981, part-time Police NS was replaced by full-time NS, and training was taken over by the Police Academy. One of his first tasks as Commander VSC was to motivate some 600 existing VSC volunteers to return to active service. A vigorous recruitment drive was launched. Posters were put up everywhere, door-to-door visits conducted, Residents’ Committees were asked to assist, and former SCNS men were contacted to sign up. Within two years, the numbers swelled to over 1,000, hitting 1,800 by the time AC (V) (Ret.) Chao left the VSC when he was elevated to the Bench.

The VSC had to do a lot with very little. AC (V) (Ret.)

Chao recalls how the VSC operated out of a makeshift office known as SCHQ in a partially burnt building within the Police Academy grounds at Thomson Road. The equipment in the VSC dental clinic was of 1940s vintage. To make the VSC work more meaningful and psychologically rewarding, he recommended postings to departments such as the Secret Societies Branch of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

By 1987, VSC officers were serving in many capacities including as honorary aides-de-camp to the President at the Istana. “All this would not have been possible if not for the good team of officers I had supporting me throughout my stint as Commander,” he shared. The VSC also played key roles in the Neighbourhood Watch groups and Boys’ Clubs. “The challenging role of promoting community relations was met head-on by the VSC.”

The highlight of his 20 years of service in the VSC was helping in the Hotel New World collapse in 1986 – a real-life demonstration of the importance of total defence. “It was a proud moment for me as Commander then, and in hindsight to watch how VSC officers served alongside the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) and Singapore Police Force (SPF) regulars with great distinction and played a truly meaningful role in the rescue efforts.”

In the words of AC (V) (Ret.) Chao: “If I were to live my life all over again, I would still choose the same path, doing my little bit to uphold law and order through the corridors of the VSC.”

# SECURITY

from **SELF-DEFENCE**

► SSI (V) Johnny Boon Kim Fho,  
Volunteer Special Constabulary,  
Singapore Police Force

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



Once, while on volunteer duty, Senior Station Inspector (SSI) (V) Johnny Boon Kim Fho was with a team of officers who received a distress call for help to deal with a fight. On arriving at the scene, they saw an attacker using a belt to attack a victim on the ground. Blood and flesh could be seen on the floor. He and his team immediately drew their batons and subdued the attacker. "It is not common to witness such a scene in Singapore. The gruesome scene right before me stuck in my mind for a long time to come. I was very thankful that we were able to subdue the attacker quickly to prevent him from causing more hurt."

He and his colleagues had the skills and self-confidence to do what they did because of their training in unarmed combat. SSI (V) Boon, 54, a Deputy Team Leader at the Criminal Investigation Department's Volunteer Special Constabulary (VSC) unit, was previously serving in the Police Training Command as OCVSC Police Defence Tactics (PDT), leading a team of qualified VSC PDT trainers to train VSC trainee officers. He also conducted annual PDT trainer certification and recertification for VSC officers.

SSI (V) Boon has been practising karate for more than 20 years and observes that self-defence requires years of training to become effective.

Self-defence requires more than just technique. Patience, determination and discipline are also important

to become more proficient. Many of his trainees in self-defence are young officers without any experience in martial arts. "During the PDT training, many of these young officers often find training harsh and the lessons difficult to follow. It is not uncommon for some trainees to break down during training and, for a while, feel like giving up."

He helps them carry on and succeed. As a trainer, he knows he has to connect with his trainees. "It is not just about passing on the techniques. Instead, I let my trainees know that they can approach me regarding any issue and I will try my best to understand and help them. During training, I will try to spot trainees having difficulty following the lessons and offer to tutor them." Being approachable helps the trainees feel more comfortable, and this helps them persevere through the course. "Often, I get to see my trainees graduate with pride and confidence in their ability to ensure Singapore's safety."

SSI (V) Boon believes that every member of society plays an equally important part in helping to keep the nation safe. Members of the public can contribute by just keeping a vigilant eye out for any suspicious characters in their neighbourhood and reporting them to their neighbourhood police post or centre. "This action alone will play a very big role in helping to prevent crime from occurring. This, in a way, is the community's own mode of 'self-defence'."

# NOT GIVING UP ON ANYONE

– Walking with the Condemned

► Sister M Gerard Fernandez,  
Roman Catholic Prison Ministry,  
Singapore Prison Service

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



Sister M Gerard Fernandez, 77, of the Good Shepherd Congregation, started prison work in 1977, and founded the Roman Catholic Prison Ministry with Father Brian Doro and Father PJ O'Neil. She spent many hours "walking with the condemned", those who had been sentenced to death.

Her first case was Catherine Tan Mui Choo, her former pupil at Marymount Vocational Centre and wife of the serial killer Adrian Lim, who was hanged together with him in 1988 for a series of brutal murders. When she read about their arrest in the newspapers in 1981, Sister Gerard wrote to the Director of Prisons to ask to be allowed to visit, but got no response from Catherine at first. Six months later, she received a letter signed off as "your black sheep, Catherine", and then spent the next seven years "walking" with Catherine in prison. "I was really so happy when Catherine asked to see me. I still have her letters, which are so special to me. The greatest thing for me was that the Prison authorities were very, very good. All these years, they have trusted me."

Adrian Lim's mistress, Hoe Kah Hong, who was also involved in the murders and similarly in prison, saw Sister Gerard singing and praying with Catherine, and asked to see her, and eventually also became a Catholic and came

to feel free from her own guilt. On the day of their hanging, she recalls, both women kept saying "Thank you, Sir" to the Prison officers as they walked up to their deaths. "They were so happy, the last week. Even Adrian came back to the Lord. All three went peacefully. That was because of the environment – the officers were so respectful, they treated them as persons with dignity, and sent them off with dignity."

After that case, she says, she "was very much part of death row, and the officers knew me". She continued to serve, respecting the inmates' confidentiality, until 2015, when the Church archives went to interview her, and shot a video for the Church's SG50 celebrations. "That was when my cover was blown – nobody knew who I was until SG50. That long! Because I broke my silence – I was interviewed by the Catholic Church. Even when the *Catholic News* had wanted to interview me before, I have always refused. But since it was SG50, I agreed."

She sees in the Singapore Prisons the beauty of working together with representatives of different religions, whether pastors or Buddhist monks, who can be present with the inmates until the last moment. For her, there is always goodness in every person. "It is just that you need someone to bring it out. ... Don't give up on anyone. Everyone has the potential to be a beautiful person."

## A DIFFERENT FORM of FAITH

► Ustaz Hasbi Hassan and Ustaz Ali Haji Mohamed, Religious Rehabilitation Group, Ministry of Home Affairs

Not everyone is aware of a volunteer group whose work can be said to be the spiritual adjunct of the Yellow Ribbon Project, to help religious extremist detainees reintegrate into society. In 2001 and 2002, several members of the radical group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) were arrested for plotting to create unrest in Singapore. After the arrests, religious teachers Ustaz Hasbi Hassan and Ustaz Ali Haji Mohamed were asked by the Government to assist in providing religious counselling to the detainees. This led to the formation of the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) in 2003. The RRG conducts public forums and talks to create awareness. The RRG Resource and Counselling Centre was opened in 2014, and an RRG Helpline was launched in 2015. As Ustaz Ali says, “The RRG is an example of how religious leaders can assist in reducing the threat of terrorism in the country.”

RRG co-Chairman Ustaz Hasbi, who is also President of Pergas (Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers’ Association), was already volunteering to deal with religiously motivated extremism before the RRG was formed. Among the detained members of the JI terror network detained, there were some detainees who were also involved with the Moro conflict in the Philippines. He says: “For us, helping these detainees back onto the true path of Islam is a religious obligation ... so that people do not misunderstand Islam.”

RRG co-Chairman Ustaz Ali, who is also Chairman of the Asatizah (Religious Teachers) Recognition Board, adds: “We needed to develop an approach to win over the hearts and minds of the detainees. Initially, they were not responsive. Later, they opened their minds.” The detainees are released only after they meet many requirements to ensure that they no



longer pose a security threat. RRG’s scholars work very closely with psychologists from the Ministry of Home Affairs to better understand the mindset of the detainees, and also to arrange for female scholars (ustazahs) to provide religious counselling for the detainees’ wives and families.

One big challenge was that the RRG started from nothing, Ustaz Hasbi recalls. “We started from scratch. We had no precedents to follow, no guidelines to start us off in the right direction. We were truly pioneers in the field of religious rehabilitation.” There were challenges too from society and within the community. Some people thought they wanted to help the JI; others suspected this was a government conspiracy. To clear the air, RRG members met religious teachers to explain this role. Today, new challenges have emerged. ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) is more worrying because whereas JI targeted adults, ISIS targets teenagers who are more easily influenced. ISIS has a wider reach than JI through the internet and social media, and is harder to monitor because it influences people to act alone, whereas JI operated in groups. Hence, RRG is focusing on recruiting younger religious teachers who can better relate to the youth. As Ustaz Ali observes: “There are thousands of radical websites. The RRG can only do so much in its counter-ideology efforts. So we must educate the community to accept the ISIS threat as a problem that everyone needs to address.”

One memorable experience for Ustaz Hasbi was when a JI detainee he had counselled was given the option to discontinue counselling after his release but chose to carry on studying under his supervision. “The most amazing part was that he brought along his family as well. He did not wish his child to follow in his footsteps and wanted his family to learn and gain as much as well. Till today, he continues to study under my tutelage.” A few other detainees still attend his religious classes, even though they do not have to anymore.

For the detainees he works with, as well as the general public, Ustaz Hasbi believes in encouraging different forms of faith other than towards one’s religion – for people to be patriotic, to feel a sense of belonging to Singapore, so they will always be willing to contribute. “This is our country and we should always do something to take care of, and protect, our home and family.” Ustaz Ali adds: “The least one can do is to be always vigilant and aware of the consequences of any instability within the country and help to inform family members, friends and the community of any form of threat that exists in the community.”

(left) Ustaz Ali (top) Ustaz Hasbi Photos: Home Team Academy

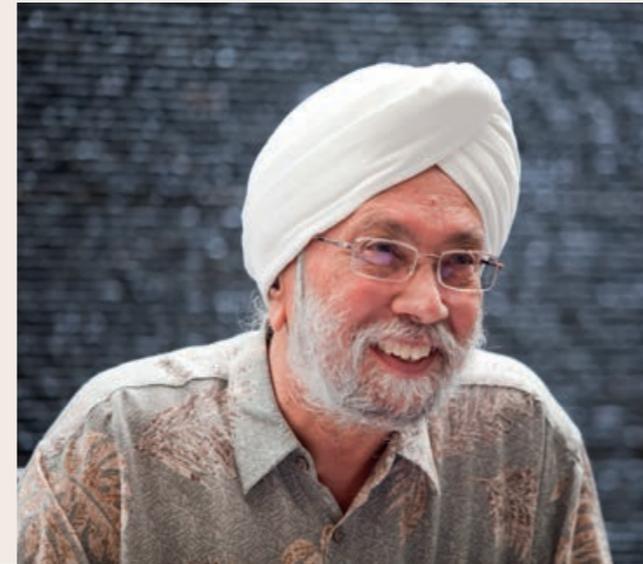


Photo: Home Team Academy

## The “OTHER 50 PER CENT”

► Mr Dilbagh Singh, Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association and Sikh Welfare Council, Singapore Prison Service

Only 50 per cent of the time – that’s how much he sometimes feels the inmates he counsels are telling him the truth, says Mr Dilbagh Singh, 73. Mr Singh has been a volunteer with Singapore Prison Service (SPS) through the Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association (SANA) for 11 years, where he served as Chairman, and with the Sikh Welfare Council for four years. But he accepts this reality and focuses instead on the “other 50 per cent”. “Over time, you will question and re-question, and eventually the truth will come out. You begin to read people.”

Reading people comes naturally to this retired secondary school principal and veteran educator with 39 years’ experience, who has taught at all levels, from primary school to “A” levels. It was through his work in school, as well as his voluntary service at a Sikh temple, that he came to become concerned about the welfare of the Sikh community in Singapore, especially the rate of drug abuse. In the 1980s, SANA’s counselling work in the prisons was mainly done through religious organisations, whereas today it is through the ethnic self-help groups.

In the course of counselling work, there were times he felt helpless. There were inmates who were nice to him only because they wanted something, such as a passport or referrals for a job, and lost contact once they were

released. Once, he went to visit a former inmate at his residence in Hougang, and two days later read that he had committed suicide by jumping to his death from the apartment block. “I questioned myself: Where did I not do the right thing? What else could I have done? Things come to your mind – why should it happen?”

A key factor in rehabilitation is whether the inmates’ families support them when they are released. Complete success stories are few and far between. The best example is a story of total reform – a former inmate who now works as a cleaner at a Sikh temple in Silat Road. “We use him as a role model now. I think he is amazing. We have taken him to prison with us to counsel others – to show that if he can be reformed, others can be, as well.” He recently got married, and Mr Singh was invited. “I told him that this was the best thing that could happen to him, and he himself knows that. These are the kinds of things that would really make you feel happy.”

Working on the “other 50 per cent” might seem daunting, but what motivates him is going in with the mindset that one is not going to succeed. “But you are going to try. You are going to continue. That is the only thing that will keep you going. If your mission is that maybe you can save one per cent, that is good enough. That is how it works.”

## The KEY is UPLIFTING SELF-ESTEEM

► Mr Philip Lim, Yellow Ribbon Project, Singapore Prison Service

Photo: Home Team Academy



Mr Philip Lim, 64, is a volunteer with the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) who simply believes that society should not discriminate against former inmates, but should give them a second chance. He started his volunteer work with his church's prisons outreach programme known as the prisons ministry, and since he found out about the Yellow Ribbon Project in 2004, has stayed committed ever since, to this effort to encourage society – especially family, employers and friends – to accept former inmates back into society.

From his volunteer work, Mr Lim has learnt that it is important not to look at someone's past. "Instead, we should assist them and show them that we are one. If we continue to treat them differently, they will relapse and we will have never-ending stories, which will use the limited resources which Singapore has. These limited resources can be used to make Singapore an even better, safer and more peaceful place."

He focuses on trying to help former inmates secure a job to keep them busy and have a purpose in life. The key is to uplift their self-esteem. For example, one former inmate he knows returned to prison after less than a year. He

confided in Mr Lim that he failed to stay outside the prison walls as he was not gainfully employed, and so lapsed and joined his old friends. It would have been different if he had found a job and did not have to rely on others for his daily expenses, and if his family had supported him. He would not then have felt looked down on.

The most successful case Mr Lim has seen was when the private educational institution where he works as a student liaison manager accepted a student from the Prison school. This student went on to graduate with a degree in finance and accounting, and now works as a manager with a furniture manufacturing plant in Jurong. Another former inmate he knows is now married with two children, and works hard, driving a bus ferrying workers early in the morning, and also driving a taxi and doing a car polishing job.

Mr Lim believes in the Yellow Ribbon Project and mentions that: "We should share our experiences, both the success stories and the less successful ones too. Every little extra contribution helps." He adds: "Yes, we are unable to help each and every one, but if we can help one or two or three integrate successfully into society, I think this is good enough to keep us going."

## FIGHTING RADICALISATION

– Every Outreach Matters



► Mrs Mary Thomas, Temasek Polytechnic, partner with the Ministry of Home Affairs

Photo: Home Team Academy



Combating the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) may seem like a tall order. But Mrs Mary Thomas, a Senior Lecturer in Communications at Temasek Polytechnic for some 20 years, is doing whatever she can. She has been a close partner with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in its outreach efforts to Polytechnic students. In just three years, she has facilitated MHA in its counter-ideology efforts to engage over 600 Polytechnic students and lecturers via various platforms such as the Polytechnic Forum.

At Temasek Polytechnic, she also chairs the National Education Committee, which holds forums, events and learning journeys. She and her colleagues devised a subject called "Contemporary Issues, Global Perspectives" dealing with five issues – culture and society, environment, technology, politics and leadership, and security and stability. Through Temasek Polytechnic's National Education forums, Mrs Thomas and her colleagues had heard about MHA's community outreach efforts. Hence, for the topic on security and stability, they approached MHA for help in providing and presenting the content to the students about the security landscape and the phenomenon of self-radicalisation. Now, every semester, one lecture will be done by MHA's community engagement officers in a workshop format. Forums are also held for staff.

The teachers were quite surprised to find that as many

as 90 per cent of students are completely unaware of the phenomenon of self-radicalisation, even in relation to the threat from ISIS. Even Muslim students may not be aware of the systems of strict *hudud* laws, which have already been implemented in countries such as Brunei. The teachers realised how little the students knew from reading the reflection journals for the subject. Through these journals, it was obvious what areas the students were unaware of. "We found Singaporean students are living in a cocoon, quite happily in a state of complete ignorance. They don't think that there is anything happening because we are safe, and we have always been safe in Singapore. Everything works, everything runs well. I think it's good for them to understand that the world may not always be like that."

Mrs Thomas thinks that what young people today want to hear are narratives and stories that make the messages real for them. Messages must connect with where they are in their lives and touch them emotively too. This is where MHA officers make an impact because they provide students with an understanding of Singapore's security in a regional context. "If our neighbours are not stable and secure, it will have a great impact on the very small space that we occupy as Singapore – a very strategic but very small space. To imagine that we will always be secure is very much a myth."

The Importance of being  
**INVOLVED** in the  
**COMMUNITY**  
 to Keep the Fabric of Society Strong

► Mr Lim Hock San,  
 National Council Against Drug Abuse,  
 Central Narcotics Bureau

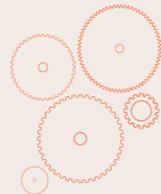


Photo: Home  
 Team Academy



The sense of being part of a larger community was all-powerful in the work of Mr Lim Hock San as the first Chairman of the National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA) from 1995 to 2007. A sense of public-spiritedness is vital for every citizen to have, he believes. "Everyone who lives in Singapore is part of the fabric that defines Singapore and its culture, and can and should participate. If there is an opportunity to be a volunteer, everyone can do so, to a larger or smaller extent, to his or her ability."

As NCADA chairman, Mr Lim played a key role in mobilising the community to address the drug problem. He successfully identified and tapped the support and talent of many members of the general community as well as the business sector and worked closely with the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), the Singapore Prison Service (SPS), the Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE), and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), to devise effective anti-drug abuse messages in preventive public education.

He sees the MHA's tough stance and zero tolerance for drug abuse as setting the tone for a drug-free Singapore, and this clear foundation and backdrop in society makes it extremely satisfying to be a volunteer. He noted that NCADA played a role in thinking through and working with the MHA officials on developing the kinds of policies that would be most effective in fighting and minimising drug abuse in Singapore. "We were encouraged by the decisiveness of the Ministerial leadership, and MHA's

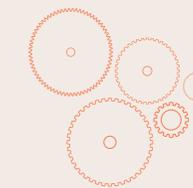
clarity in dealing with the drug problem."

It also helped that NCADA members, with their diverse backgrounds, put their private sector experience to good use on a societal issue. They were fully aware that although the drug issue directly concerns only a narrow segment of the population, it has wider implications on society, from protecting the youth against the scourge of drugs to ensuring that crime rates remained low. The challenges faced, though daunting, were surmounted through consensus and a shared sense of mission among the various government agencies, voluntary welfare organisations and religious groups.

In his view, it is easy to volunteer with the Home Team because of a shared ethos and common values, and a conducive environment for volunteering. His own time as a volunteer has prompted him to reflect on the realities of life. "The world is a harsh and unforgiving place. Wars and sectarian violence lead to refugees. Incompetence and corrupt governments, and a lack of checks and balances lead people astray. We should be grateful to enjoy the peace, safety and security in Singapore, and play our part in the community to keep it this way."

He has seen how the community spirit resonates with, and appeals to, people to not be mere bystanders or observers. What is more, volunteers will benefit even as they are helping society. "They should step right in and be an active part of the community. Studies have also shown that being socially engaged, and serving as a volunteer to assist others has long-term health and longevity benefits."

**NEW WAYS**  
 to **STAY SAFE**



► Mr Alan Loh, National  
 Fire and Civil Emergency  
 Preparedness Council,  
 Singapore Civil Defence Force

Photo: Singapore  
 Civil Defence Force



Public education might seem somewhat mundane to most people, but it gets Mr Alan Loh energised, even after serving 21 years as a volunteer with the National Fire and Civil Emergency Preparedness Council (previously the National Fire Prevention Council). Mr Loh, 58, the Council's current Chairman, works in the area of workplace safety at a multinational manufacturing company. Nothing gets him going more than finding new and better ways to help others learn to stay safe.

Every year, the Council runs a civil emergency drill, and tries to find a new type of location to run it. In 2014, it was at a shopping centre, Jurong Point. "It was interesting because Jurong Point allowed us to do the drill at 3pm, when there were a lot of shoppers. This was fantastic because, for years, no shopping centre had ever volunteered to do this drill because it means a loss of business, because when you do a fire drill, it takes about an hour, tenants have to volunteer to shut down operations, the public have to evacuate and all that. ... It was tremendous, there were about 2,000 people involved."

In 2015, the drill took place at a factory at Tuas. Other previous locations included hotels and the Ministry of Manpower after its move into a new building at Bendemeer Road. Looking ahead, the Council is looking to run these drills in diverse places such as hospitals, places of worship and at a university or other tertiary institutions.

"If you don't do a drill, you never realise what's wrong." At Universal Studios Singapore at Sentosa, the realisation was that fire wardens have to be well-trained. "Because people have a herd mentality, we just follow the leader. So you need a good leader who knows what to do."

Most of the time, education on fire safety and civil emergency preparedness happens – appropriately – in schools. "For the schools, we want to make sure they have a focus on fire safety right from young." This is done all the way from kindergarten, mainly through activities such as arts and crafts, through to polytechnics, where the focus is on getting youth involved in the Civil Defence Lionhearts programme for leadership and community work.

To educate the general public, the Singapore Civil Defence Force has its Emergency Preparedness Centre (EPC) at Central Fire Station at Hill Street to convey safety awareness. After he experienced an earthquake himself while on holiday in Hokkaido, Mr Loh suggested that it would be good for the EPC to expose Singaporeans to natural disasters they might encounter abroad. So, part of the EPC concept changed. "It was no longer just about making sure we were safe here in Singapore, but also about making sure Singaporeans are able to respond to emergencies elsewhere." With this, the scope of Mr Loh's work has extended far beyond a safe and disaster-free Singapore.

sharing  
**KNOWLEDGE,**  
serving  
**SOCIETY**

► Mr Chong Teng Kok,  
ICA Ambassador, Immigration  
& Checkpoints Authority

Photo: Home  
Team Academy



Two years ago, Mr Chong Teng Kok was on a group tour to Vietnam with other Singaporeans when he saw a couple with two young children who were fascinated by the replica of a tank and a fighter plane at a souvenir shop. The couple wanted to buy the items for their children, but he advised them that such items are prohibited in Singapore as they have parts made from empty bullet shells. The couple then thanked him and bought something else for the children instead. By sharing his knowledge of prohibited and controlled items such as ammunition, which has been gained from many years of volunteering with the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA), he had helped to save the children from disappointment should the souvenirs be brought back and seized at Changi Airport.

Mr Chong, 63, a senior executive with the National Crime Prevention Council, has served as ICA's lead crime prevention ambassador since ICA set up its first group of ambassadors in 2006. The ambassadors assisted in disseminating ICA's key messages on topics including illegal entry and overstaying, and phone scams to targeted stakeholders, including foreign workers, students and senior citizens.

During road shows and public exhibitions in the HDB heartlands, he helps to inform members of the public who sometimes ask about immigration policies or seek clarification on the criteria for long-term visit passes,

permanent residency and employment of foreigners. He feels comfortable in his interaction with members of the public as ICA equips its volunteers with the necessary knowledge to handle different types of questions, through periodic refresher courses.

He cites the terrorist bombing in Thailand in August 2015 – which took 20 lives, including a Singaporean, and left more than a hundred injured – as a reminder of the need to be vigilant in maintaining Singapore's security. It is this focus on vigilance that motivated him to volunteer with a few Home Team departments, including the Singapore Police Force (SPF) and the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB). He sees his voluntary work as a continuation of his work previously as a police officer. "Volunteering with these departments has enabled me to see the larger picture of what it means to ensure the safety and security of Singapore. Each role requires me to interact with different target groups. I am therefore far richer for the exposure, having acquired different knowledge and skill-sets."

He believes that members of the public can do a lot to help spread the ICA messages to their family members, neighbours and friends. His message to all Singaporeans is that it is good to volunteer with the Home Team because safety and security is essentially everyone's responsibility. "If you don't do your part to protect Singapore against acts of terrorism or wrongdoing, who will?"

**TREASURE  
TROVE** of  
**CIVIL  
DEFENCE**

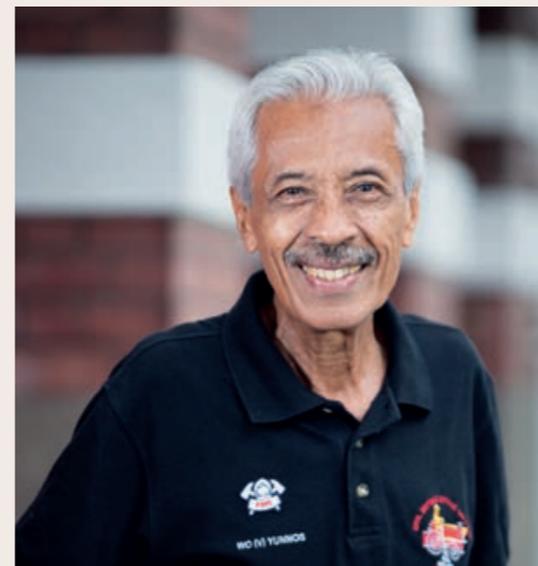


Photo: Rescue 995  
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Defence Force.  
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► WO (Ret.) Yunos Shariff,  
Civil Defence Auxiliary Unit,  
Singapore Civil Defence Force

Warrant Officer (Retired) Yunos Shariff, 73, who was previously with the Singapore Fire Service (SFS), is currently the oldest and most active volunteer with the Civil Defence Auxiliary Unit as a Heritage Gallery Guide. At the Civil Defence Heritage Gallery at Central Fire Station, he plays an important role in sharing the history of the Singapore Civil Defence Force with visitors from around the world. He shows up at the gallery even when it is closed, to help out with the upkeep of the artefacts. He was himself a "walking item of heritage", when he marched as part of the Vintage Contingent in the 2015 SG50 National Day Parade at the Padang.

Apart from acting as a museum tour guide, he also coaches the younger staff at the Gallery on the descriptions of the items on show. "These days, the visitors are not like before. The demands are different – they want to know more." In WO (Ret.) Yunos they would find a treasure trove of heritage information. For example, he would be able to explain to them the characteristics of items such as a trailer pump, which was so-named because it was trailed by lorry, to fight *kampung* fires. He also knows a lot of trivia, such as the reason that firefighting water hoses are no longer made of canvas – because then they would collect dirt and dust and be hard to wash.

Many of the items on display reflect the more basic

conditions of decades gone by. One example is the old Major Pump 3 fire engine used in the 1960s. It did not carry water, but when it was deployed, it relied on drawing well water or water from drains in the *kampongs*. Sometimes, during the dry season, the drains were dry, so the firemen resorted to using tree branches as beaters to fight fires in places such as Chinese cemeteries surrounded by a lot of dry *lallang* grass. Some fires took days to put out.

His institutional memory is phenomenal. Sometimes, visitors come to try to find out more information about their relatives or friends who used to work with the SFS and WO (Ret.) Yunos would personally know some of these people. Once, a visitor came with an old photograph, and WO (Ret.) Yunos could name all the people in it, including a British fire chief and eight ambulance attendants.

The artefacts in the gallery that are the most meaningful to him are those that belonged to him, which he had donated to the Gallery, such as an old green uniform with a bush jacket. These items are sometimes borrowed for exhibitions. He takes his time to describe them and to tell the stories behind the more interesting items. "When I explain, I make sure that the explanation is clear, so that visitors can understand better. Sometimes, whilst the regular guides take 50 minutes, I will take one hour. There are a lot of things to tell."

# From *Kampong* To **Smart Kampong**

ENHANCING SECURITY,  
AS SINGAPORE BECOMES  
A SMART NATION



“IT IS THE SPIRIT OR  
‘SEMANGAT’ OF COMMUNITY  
PARTNERSHIPS THAT KEEPS  
SINGAPORE STRONG.”

TEO CHEE HEAN  
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND COORDINATING  
MINISTER FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

**Singapore** consistently ranks among the top nations on perceptions of public safety. In a recent example, the Global Law and Order 2015 Report ranked Singapore the first out of 141 countries on the people's sense of safety in their neighbourhoods and experiences with the police. Indeed, nine in 10 residents in Singapore said that they felt safe walking home alone at night.

This is just one of the outcomes of the efforts of the Home Team, working together with the community and partner organisations to sustain peace, order and harmony. In general, there are low crime and recidivism rates, and low fire and road fatalities. The Republic's borders are secure, and drugs and illegal immigrants are kept out.

The efforts to protect Singapore's sovereignty and preservation of its social harmony have been sustained since Independence. The Home Team concept was a more recent innovation of organisational culture formalised in the 1990s, but the sense of working together as one big unit to serve the people and the nation was there from the very beginning. As Mr Marvin Sim, Senior Director of the Joint Operations Group at the Ministry of Home Affairs Headquarters (MHQ), observes:

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**“There was no Home Team concept to speak about during the generation of our pioneer officers. But every day, they were driven by a sense of mission and commitment to make a difference to the lives of Singaporeans, to ensure that Singapore is safe and secure, so that every Singaporean has the freedom to pursue their dreams. We are the beneficiaries of their sacrifices.”**

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The question is how to keep this excellent record of safety and security going, moving forward.

One thing is for sure – the job will not get easier. The world continues to surface new kinds of changes and challenges, and those whose duty it is to sustain safety and security must be agile and adapt to different circumstances and a new culture. In the security arena, the potential threats are becoming more complex. Transnational crime can now cross borders even more easily, facilitated by the information revolution and

greater access to travel. Terrorism can now win new recruits online and create chaos more quickly and cheaply than ever. Cyber-crime and cyber-security risks have now encroached into the everyday lives of ordinary folks.

Meanwhile, the Singaporean society is also evolving all the time, and creating fresh security and safety requirements. National borders are becoming more open, with about 40 per cent of marriages in Singapore currently involving non-Singaporeans. A more diverse and active citizenry will hold different views on societal norms and various safety and security issues. This will contribute to greater domestic pressures on how Home Team agencies go about doing their work, making it more challenging to maintain law and order. As a regional hub, Singapore will attract even more tourists, investors and talent, and the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) will need

The Flexible-Immigration Clearance System (Flexi-I) in use at the lanes at the Marina Bay Cruise Centre. The immigration counters at the Flexi-I lanes can be toggled between manual and automated clearance.  
Photo: Immigration & Checkpoints Authority





ICA's iCollect, a self-service kiosk that dispenses immigration-related documents including the Singapore passport.  
Photo: Immigration & Checkpoints Authority

to cater to growing traveller volumes at border checkpoints, including at Changi Airport's new terminals, the High-Speed Rail station and the Rapid Transit System station when they are built. As the population grows, along with immigration, new towns and commercial centres will need to be served by the Singapore Police Force (SPF) and the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF). The ageing population is placing greater demands on ambulance and emergency services, on top of other issues such as vulnerability to crime for those living alone. Some 10 to 15 per cent of households are now single-person households.

Even the many initiatives to enhance the quality of life and to make for a more liveable city can bring new safety concerns. For example, the "active mobility" movement to promote cycling and walking brings with it new considerations, including

the need for citizens to be more aware of their own wellbeing, whether on bicycle or on foot. This is an area where organisations such as the Singapore Road Safety Council can help with public education, especially for an ageing population. Another example is the desire to refresh urban design to enhance community engagement, which includes new initiatives such as "borderless" development sites that will have fewer fences or gates at ground level, thus requiring a different approach to security.

For the Home Team, manpower will remain a key resource that has to be cleverly managed and maximised. The inescapable reality of demographic trends is that the future will see smaller cohorts of Singaporeans entering the workforce. Within a few years, the post-war "baby boom" generation born in the mid-1950s to early-1960s, which are large cohorts of up to 65,000, will start retiring and leaving the workforce. And they are being replaced by smaller cohorts of 18 to 20-year-olds, who will number only around 30,000 per year – about half the number of people in each cohort than before. What this means is that there will be a greater need to work smart, to achieve more with fewer people.

#### ► MAKING SINGAPORE EVEN SAFER: ENHANCING THE "OODA" DECISION LOOP

No matter what the social, economic and other changes will be, achieving operational excellence will remain a priority for the Home Team. It will still be a 24/7 job, with many "live", and often rapidly evolving, situations to deal with every day. In operations research, the concept of the "OODA" decision loop summarises the key actions needed into four main ones – to *observe* the situation, *orient* self to see what is going on, *decide*, and then *act*. When an incident occurs, the operational command level needs to quickly get a good picture of the actual ground situation, so as to assess the requirements and deploy forces in a timely manner to influence the ground situation. This decision process has to aim to be always faster than the speed at which the situation is changing.

Opened by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in April 2015, the Police Operations Command Centre (POCC) is the nerve centre of the Singapore Police Force (SPF) and operates 24 hours daily. It coordinates information and resources across the whole of SPF and manages SPF's response to information received through various sources – including 999 emergency calls by the public, police hotline and CrimeStopper. It also contains the SPF HQ Incident Command Post, which is set up when the police has major operations to run.  
Photo: Singapore Police Force

To enhance its organisational OODA loop, the Home Team has been investing in new tools to equip officers to monitor and make sense of situations more effectively as well as to make faster and better decisions. Police cameras have been installed progressively in HDB void decks and also in camera zones in critical areas downtown, and in other hotspots. The In-Vehicle Video Recording System in fast-response cars, which was introduced in July 2014, is being improved further, so that “live” images can be piped back to the Operations Room. New centralised command and control systems have been in place in the SCDF since end-2013, and for the SPF since November 2014. The SPF, for instance, implemented CUBICON II, a New Generation Command and Control System to replace the current system which was implemented in 2000.

To take in all these technological advances – and the societal and other changes that they will inevitably bring – the Ministry of Home Affairs' vision for the future will



also have to be refined. If the best benefits of technology are harnessed, the Home Team and the people can work together, like never before, to solve crime, protect borders, fight drug abuse and trafficking, mobilise responses to civil emergencies – in short, to prevent and deter all manner of threats to the nation's safety and security. With the new options offered by technology, there is tremendous potential to take community policing to a whole new level. In a real-time digital universe, it will become possible to connect with practically every citizen anytime, anywhere. Since almost every person now has a smartphone or other mobile device, the Home Team can draw on photo or video feeds sent to it to build a comprehensive big picture of incidents as they develop, and so help to track moving or multiple incidents. These new networks can be linked up with other public and private sector agencies through Singapore's Smart Nation initiative.

Singapore's aspiration to become the world's first complete “smart nation” was spelt out by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the launch of the initiative in November 2014:

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**“Our vision is for Singapore to be a Smart Nation – A nation where people live meaningful and fulfilled lives, enabled seamlessly by technology, offering exciting opportunities for all. We should see it in our daily living where networks of sensors and smart devices enable us to live sustainably and comfortably. We should see it in our communities where technology will enable more people to connect to one another more easily and intensely. We should see it in our future where we can create possibilities for ourselves beyond what we imagined possible.”**

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The possibilities of gathering and applying such “big data” range from collating personal health information for better medical care in hospitals, to using driverless buggies at Jurong Lake District. With the use of big data and analytics, the Home Team can more efficiently deploy the right type of resources to manage the right incidents based on their risks and severity, sometimes even before they happen. By way of analogy, the introduction of Neighbourhood Police Centres (NPC) gathered data and decision-making across a wider area, and so enhanced the effect and efficiency of the old police



(above) The vehicle designs for the Fast Response Car (FRC) (as pictured), Traffic Police (TP) motorcycle, Police Coast Guard (PCG) PC-2 series boat, Scene of Crime Van and Special Operations Command (SOC) Tactical Vehicle (TAV) feature the updated SPF crest and SPF's secondary graphic – the alternating chevrons. The updated designs increase the visibility and recognisability of our vehicles and are aimed at creating greater reassurance for the public and boosting deterrence against crime. The updated SPF crest is simplified, modernised and impactful for both online and physical platforms while the alternating chevrons reflect SPF's efforts to partner the public to keep our nation safe and secure. *Photo: Singapore Police Force*

(left) The in-vehicle video recording system was rolled out in police Fast Response Cars islandwide as part of a plan by the Singapore Police Force to tap technology to keep crime at bay. *Photo: Singapore Press Holdings*



The SPF is exploring the use of drones to enhance policing capabilities. The Police Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), which has been developed in collaboration with IDA Labs since October 2014, is equipped with blinkers, siren, searchlight and surveillance functions. The prototype may be deployed during public order situations to increase police presence and enhance situational awareness. *Photo: Singapore Police Force*

posts. In the same way, a smart nation could amplify the security impact of the Home Team through the collection and analysis of real-time data across the whole country.

In a smart nation, technology will continue to serve as an important tool for the Home Team to achieve the same ultimate aim – to keep this home safe. The Home Team's mission "is about creating a safe home for all, including my loved ones and me", in the words of SUPT Benjamin Chia of the Singapore Prison Service (SPS). He observes that this "safe home" is often taken for granted, and people only remember what it takes when they are hit by crisis or incidents.

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**"I count myself blessed to be in a position to impact and serve the people through my work of creating a society with low recidivism rates. I hope the Home Team continues to grow in unity and purpose anchored on deep values and providing a safe space for all and their future generations who call this place home."**

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Keeping our home safe will require adaptation and application to new capabilities. In the security field, some initial steps have already been taken to apply new practices and develop fresh competencies. The new Home Team Biometrics Programme Office set up in September 2014 coordinates the adoption of biometric technologies across

the Home Team. The Integrated Checkpoints Command, launched in January 2015, will further strengthen coordination among Home Team agencies operating at border checkpoints. To ensure operational preparedness and to be ready for crises and major incidents, a series of security-focused exercises will stress-test agencies' real-time processes and responses to various scenarios. To staff all these operations, the Home Team officers of the future will have to keep upgrading their capabilities and deepening their skills. They will have to continue to be motivated by the right values and camaraderie and the Home Team ethos.

### ► COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN A NEW DIGITAL UNIVERSE

For many years now, the Home Team has been an early mover in engaging the various segments of the community and partnering with them on safety and security. It is constantly seeking ways to do things better and to bring these partnerships to an even higher level.

Today, as society evolves in social, digital and other dimensions, and with a higher level of education and more awareness of social responsibilities, there are more people who are able and willing to do more to serve the community. The community can be a co-owner of solutions for safety and security problems in Singapore. Community

partnership will therefore continue to be a critical priority in responding to new challenges. The challenge for the Home Team is to help the community to take greater ownership of issues, and make it easier for those who want to play a part in contributing to the safety and security of their own community.

For example, SCDF unveiled the "Save-a-Life" initiative in August 2015, which trains, equips and organises a network of community responders to respond quickly and effectively to cardiac arrest cases in the community. An ongoing trial in six precincts has installed automated external defibrillators (AEDs) at the lift lobbies of HDB blocks that residents can use to respond

An automated external defibrillator (AED), encased in glass, on display at Ngee Ann City shopping mall on Orchard Road. Considered a life-saving machine, the AEDs are meant for public use to help heart attack victims.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings



The myResponder mobile application – put together by the SCDF in collaboration with the Singapore Heart Foundation – alerts registered users to nearby cases of suspected cardiac arrest, allowing them to assist as Community First Responders before the SCDF arrives.  
Photo: Singapore Civil Defence Force

to emergency situations to help their neighbours. Advancements in technology have made AEDs quite simple to use. Technology has also enabled this system in another way because the police cameras "watch over" the AEDs to deter people from tampering with them. Studies have shown that the use of AEDs can increase a victim's survival chances by up to 30 per cent, up very significantly from just two per cent without AEDs. Complementing the "Save-a-Life" initiative is the introduction of the MyResponder mobile app that is jointly developed by the SCDF and the Singapore Heart Foundation and supported by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore under the Smart Nation initiative. The app is the first of its kind in the world to enhance the survival rate of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest cases by integrating three components to promptly notify volunteers who are trained in CPR-AED procedure to help cardiac arrest victims in their immediate vicinity, while also alerting them to the nearby publicly accessible AEDs. All these initiatives are part of a wider SCDF 2025 Vision of building a Nation of Life Savers by instilling the importance of Community First Responders and encouraging more individuals to be trained in emergency preparedness skills so that they can step forward to assist those in distress.



mySCDF mobile app.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

Another use of technology for the community is SCDF's mySCDF mobile app. This app allows the public to browse SCDF publications, acquire knowledge on basic lifesaving skills, and provide feedback to the SCDF on non-compliance to fire safety regulations by submitting photos and locations of such non-compliances. As SCDF's LTC Shaiful Herman Shali observes:

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**“The SCDF is now embarking on a mission to make Singapore a Nation of Lifesavers where everyone, young and old, can play a part in being a community first responder and help save lives.”**

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Such increased public participation means that the notion of an “SCDF family” already includes an “extended family” of volunteers and helpers, whether on a regular or ad hoc basis.

Meanwhile, the police have made its online portals more accessible to the public who can now upload videos and file reports on them. The more than five million cameras on everyone's phones and cars can create a very powerful deterrent effect on crime, and can also help to solve crimes. The Facebook pages set up by NPCs alone have allowed the public to come forward to partner the police to solve cases through Facebook appeals.

To develop their roles further in future, Home Team departments need to envisage the future of all the areas under their charge, including border checkpoints, prisons, prevention of drug abuse, frontline policing and community policing and the reintegration of ex-offenders into society. An even more integrated approach will be needed in planning key areas of capabilities covering areas such as centralised communications and command-and-control systems, data-sharing and strategic workforce planning. The continued development of such key capability areas of the Home Team is a source of assurance for officers such as Mr How Kwang Hwee, Senior Director, Policy Development at MHQ, as they look towards SG100 and Singapore's next 50 years, with the rest of the nation. As he says:

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**“I wake up every morning knowing that I can play my small part in ensuring their safety. I go to sleep every night knowing that our streets are safe. I look ahead to the future with confidence. I see the Home Team transforming to get ready for the future.”**

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The overall outcome of all these developments in security is a society that can continue to differentiate itself in ways that are sometimes more apparent to visitors, even those from other societies where security is also taken very seriously. As AC Cora Chen of ICA recalls, her Japanese friend visited Singapore some years ago and was so bemused by the high coverage the media had given to loan shark cases that she brought back a copy of *The Straits Times* to show her family in Japan how safe Singapore was.

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**“To me, this act was a huge compliment to the achievements of the Home Team – a team I feel proud to be in. My aspiration is for us to continue the good work the Home Team pioneers have started and continue to make Singapore the safest country in the world.”**

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Since the 1950s, the key to sustaining the relations between the security agencies and the community was the support and involvement of the people from the *kampongs*. Today, the Home Team is being further streamlined, refined and enhanced in a smart nation, even as it stays true to its ethos of core values centred on honour and unity in all aspects of duty to the nation – including neighbourhood policing, civil emergency preparedness, border protection, community rehabilitation and social harmony. Looking ahead, these areas will continue to draw from deep reservoirs of social capital, nurtured over five decades and more, to spur the even deeper enlistment and empowerment of the whole country as one smart *kampung*.

Rifle casings hurtling into the air as a commando fires from behind a Singapore Police Force tactical response vehicle, as part of the dynamic defence display, which involved 31 different SAF and Home Team equipment and 200 participants, at the National Day Parade held at The Float@Marina Bay on 9 August 2014.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings



Officers from the Public Transport Security Command (TransCom) unit. Photo: Singapore Police Force

Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) officers battle a fire which broke out in a field in Tampines Street 72 on 3 March 2010.  
*Photo: Singapore Press Holdings*





Participants of the Yellow Ribbon Prison Run 2010 nearing the finish line within the walls of the Changi Prison Complex on 5 September. Themed "Beyond The Run", the Yellow Ribbon Prison Run is about giving ex-offenders a second chance to start afresh. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

CNB Danceworks Cat II B winner,  
Funky Nutz (Juying Secondary School).  
Photo: Central Narcotics Bureau



# I M M I G R A T I O N



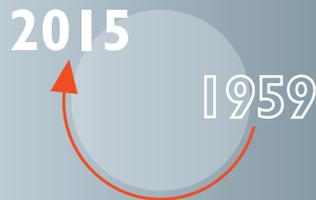
Immigration checkpoint at Changi Airport Terminal 3.  
Photo by Bryan van der Beek



The Singapore Police Force (SPF) contingent during the National Day Parade (NDP) preview show on 31 July 2010. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings



Contingents from the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) and the Singapore Police Force (SPF) marching during a symbolic segment dubbed "Onward March", signifying the progressive spirit of a country moving forward, during the National Day Parade (NDP) preview show at Marina Bay Floating Platform on 30 July 2011. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings



1959

► **Ministry of Home Affairs formed:**  
The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) was set up in 1959 when Singapore attained self-government. It was housed at the former Empress Place Building and remained there until 1963 when Singapore joined the Federation of Malaysia and internal affairs became a federal responsibility.



Empress Place Building  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

► **Phantom Squad successfully wipes gangsters off the streets:**  
Formed in March 1959 as a response to notorious gangland activities, the elite Phantom Squad met with quick success in wiping out hoodlums. In six months, the police detained more than 125 suspects. By October 1959, 29 gangsters arrested under the Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Ordinance of 1958 had been convicted and sentenced to jail. Ten of the Phantom Squad officers received commendations for their achievements.

1960

► **Recommendations by the Prisons Inquiry Commission:**  
In 1960, the Prisons Inquiry Commission, which was set up to review the prison system, made recommendations emphasising a reformatory and rehabilitative approach to the management of prisoners.

1963

► **First Asian Commissioner of Police:**  
John Le Cain, who was born in Thailand and moved to Singapore at the age of two, became the first Asian Commissioner of Police in 1963. He led the Police Force through the turbulent times of *Konfrontasi*, racial riots and Singapore's Separation from Malaysia. He retired in 1967 after an illustrious career with the Police Force.



Mr John Le Cain (second from left), Commissioner of Police, in 1967.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

► **Introduction of the Internal Security Act:**  
The origins of the Internal Security Act (ISA) can be traced to the Emergency Regulations enacted in 1948 – a temporary provision that was subject to continual review and reissuance. The Regulations empowered the British colonial authorities in Singapore to combat



Police detaining a man after communist instigated riots in 1955. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

1964

the communist insurgents during the Malayan Emergency, which lasted from 1948 to 1960. In October 1955, the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance replaced the Emergency Regulations in Singapore. The Ordinance extended the duration of an individual's detention to up to two years. The new law was enacted in response to increasing communist subversion and militancy as manifested in the series of strikes and riots that occurred in 1954 and 1955. The Federation of Malaysia enacted the ISA to replace the Emergency Regulations in 1960. When Singapore became a part of Malaysia on 16 September 1963, an amended version of Malaysia's ISA was extended to Singapore. The legislation was retained after Singapore gained independence in August 1965.

1964

► **Formation of the Vigilante Corps:**  
The Vigilante Corps (VC) was established to mobilise manpower required to fight *Konfrontasi*. Men between the ages of 21 and 29 were called to sign up as VC members.



People queuing to enrol in the State Vigilante Corps.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

1965

► **Singapore Provisional Passport issued:**  
When Singapore gained independence on 9 August 1965, the Immigration Department ceased to issue passports until 17 August 1965 when a new Singapore Provisional Passport in book form was introduced.

► **Ministry of the Interior and Defence formed:**  
The Ministry of the Interior and Defence (MID) was established in late 1965 when Singapore seceded from Malaysia. MID's responsibilities included, among other things, controlling the Police Force, the Immigration Department, and building up the Republic's Armed Forces.

1966

► **Special Branch becomes the Internal Security Department:**  
A Special Branch was created after World War I in 1918 by the British colonial government in Singapore to specifically deal with subversion. In 1945, after the end of World War II, the Malayan Security Service was established with Singapore as the Headquarters. On 23 August 1948, the Internal Security Department's (ISD) forerunner was established as the Special Branch.

In 1963, when Singapore joined the Malayan Federation, the Special Branch became part of the Malaysian Special Branch. However, after Separation from Malaysia in 1965, the Special Branch became part of MID until 17 February 1966 when it was formally established as the ISD.

► **The Singapore Identity Card issued:**  
When the National Registration Act (1965) came into force, a new identity card (IC) was introduced within a year, on 6 May 1966. Singapore citizens received pink ICs and permanent residents received blue ICs.

1967

► **Police National Service introduced:**  
The Police National Service (PNS) included part-time service in the Special Constabulary and the Vigilante Corps, both of which came under the Police National Service Command.  
On 14 March 1967, the second reading of the National Service (NS) (Amendment) Bill was passed. An initial batch of some 9,000 male youths eligible to be called for NS could serve their NS in one of four branches: the Army, People's Defence Force, Vigilante Corps or Special Constabulary.

► **Full immigration control between West Malaysia and Singapore:**  
Despite becoming a sovereign state on 9 August 1965, free travel existed temporarily between Singapore and West Malaysia. Within a year, two checkpoints were gazetted in anticipation of travel control between Singapore and Malaysia. These were at the Railway Station at Keppel Road and at Woodlands Checkpoint. On 1 July 1967, restricted travel documents, namely the Singapore Restricted Passport and the Singapore Restricted Certificate of Identity, were issued to facilitate travel to West Malaysia.



The first day of immigration controls at the Causeway in 1966.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

1970

► **Ministry of the Interior and Defence becomes two ministries:**  
On 11 August 1970, MID was separated into two ministries – the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF). MHA's role was to deal with matters relating to public safety, civil defence and immigration.

1971

► **Formation of the Central Narcotics Bureau:**  
The Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) was established in November 1971 as the primary drug enforcement agency entrusted with coordinating all matters pertaining to drug eradication. There were only 72 officers initially, most of whom were seconded from SPF and the Customs and Excise Department (CED).



A CNB officer taking out packets of opium from the cavity behind a car's headlights in 1973.  
Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

1972

► **Fire at Robinson's:**  
On 21 November 1972, the 114-year-old Robinson's Department Store at Raffles Place was destroyed in a huge fire that claimed nine lives and caused damage worth an estimated \$21 million. The Government subsequently called for a commission of inquiry to investigate the tragedy. Many of the commission's recommendations were later incorporated into the Building Control Act of 1974. The Act gave the authorities the power to take action against individuals responsible for unauthorised building works and dangerous or dilapidated buildings.

1973

The Fire Code, which required buildings to install various fire safety features, was drawn up in response to the Robinson's store fire.



SCDF Firemen from the Singapore Fire Brigade with water jets directed at the raging Robinson's fire. Photo: Singapore Civil Defence Force

► **Revision of the Arms Offences Act:**  
The Arms Offences Act was revised to check the sharp increase in the use of firearms during robberies. The revised Act introduced life imprisonment and mandatory caning for those convicted of using firearms for robbery or any offences; the death penalty for those who opened fire with intent to injure; and higher penalties than before for those convicted of using weapons like knives to commit offences.

► **Legislation of the Misuse of Drugs Act:**  
In July 1973, the Dangerous Drugs Act of 1951 and the Drugs (Prevention of Misuse) Act of 1969 were repealed, and the Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) (1973) came into force. The MDA gave CNB a wide range of powers to tackle the worsening drug situation then, and provided for tough penalties for drug trafficking.

1974

► **Hijack of Laju:**

On 31 January 1974, four armed men hijacked the ferry *Laju* and held five crew members as hostages. After several days of negotiations the hijackers agreed to release the hostages in exchange for a party of guarantors to ensure their safe passage out of Singapore. The incident ended on 8 February, when the hijackers left for Kuwait with 13 Singapore Government representatives acting as the guarantors.



A Marine Police patrol craft in the foreground observing the *Laju* ferry during the hijack in January 1974. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

► **Prisons Reorganisation Committee formed:**

The Prisons Reorganisation Committee was formed by MHA to review the system of rehabilitation. The committee recommended several measures to help reduce recidivism.

1975

► **Introduction of full-time Police National Service:**

The need for full-time Police National Service became evident as a consequence of the *Laju* hijack in 1974. This incident revealed the vulnerability of vital installations in Singapore such as oil refineries and power stations, and the need for armed personnel to guard them. It was decided that the police should shoulder this responsibility. However, implementation of this new role with the use of regular police officers would deplete the already hard-pressed numbers of the Force. Thus the idea of using National Servicemen in the police as full-time officers was mooted.

► **Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises established:**

On 7 November 1975, the Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE) was established as a statutory board to bring about the rehabilitation of offenders by providing vocational training courses in prisons and drug rehabilitative centres.

► **Amendment of the Misuse of Drugs Act:**

The MDA was amended to provide harsher sentences for drug traffickers. The prescribed minimum and maximum sentences for trafficking in controlled drugs were adjusted and the death penalty introduced as a form of deterrence against drug trafficking activities.

1976

► **SCORE takes over operations of prison industries:**

On 1 April 1976, SCORE officially took over the operations of the prison industries. With this development, the prison industries were no longer seen as a means to occupy an offender's time but rather as a tool for rehabilitation through inculcating good work ethics.

1977

► **Operation Ferret:**

The worsening heroin abuse situation in the 1970s called for a big-scale operation to strike a massive offensive against the drug scourge. A drug coordination committee on a national level was set up by MHA and comprised the Singapore Police Force, Prisons Department, Central Narcotics Bureau, Department of Scientific Services, and the Customs and Excise Department to take joint action against the drug problem. This major operation was code-named "Operation Ferret".

Operation Ferret swung into action on 1 April 1977. In just four days, more than 900 drug offenders were arrested. The relentless enforcement action disrupted and

cut off many traffickers' supply of heroin, and the arrest of drug abusers also meant that demand for heroin decreased.

Operation Ferret continued for 10 months. A total of 26,376 people were arrested for suspected drug abuse and their urine samples sent to the Department of Scientific Services for testing. Of these, 7,348 people who tested positive for drug abuse were committed to Drug Rehabilitation Centres for mandatory treatment and rehabilitation.

► **Ministry of Home Affairs Headquarters relocated:**

In August 1977, MHA moved from Pearl's Hill to Phoenix Park in Tanglin Road. Phoenix Park was home to MHA for more than 20 years.



MHA at Phoenix Park. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

► **Completion of Woodlands Checkpoint:**

The new Woodlands Checkpoint was constructed and completed in December 1977 to prepare for the implementation of the Exit Control Scheme for all foreign visitors on 1 January 1978. Under the scheme, all immigration checkpoints were required to have departure or exit checking facilities for the effective control of the movements of



Former Minister for Home Affairs and Education, Mr. Chua Sian Chin, at the opening of the Woodlands immigration checkpoint in 1977. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

1978

► **Disaster on board Spyros:**

On 12 October 1978, oil tanker *ST Spyros* exploded and caught fire at the Jurong Shipyard, with more than a hundred workers on board. Minutes after the accident, an extensive rescue operation swung into action, involving the police, military and medical and fire services. The disaster left 76 people dead and 69 injured. Officers from the Singapore Fire Service (SFS) were deployed to fight the fire, while the police assisted with the investigation into the cause of the fire and the identification of the victims through forensics science.



Workers on rescue boats spray jets of water onto the smoking oil tanker at Jurong Shipyard. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

1980

► **Fire Service Act of 1980 passed:**

The Fire Service Act was passed in 1980. It replaced Part IV of the local Government Integration Act (Cap 210 of the revised edition) that also saw the renaming of the Singapore Fire Brigade (SFB) to Singapore Fire Service (SFS) in February.

departing passengers. The main objective of this Exit Control Scheme was to prevent non-genuine visitors from coming to Singapore to remain illegally or to overstay. Along with the completion of the Woodlands Checkpoint, departure or exit checking facilities were also added to existing checkpoints in 1977.

1982

► **Founding of Police Boys' Clubs:**

Under the community outreach initiative, the Police Boys' Clubs were set up to keep at-risk youth from falling into bad company. The first Boys' Club was set up in MacPherson.

1983

► **Cable car disaster:**

On 29 January 1983, seven passengers died when two Sentosa cable cars plunged into the sea after the cableway was struck by the derrick of an oil drilling vessel. The rescue planning team was led by the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) and included the SPF and the SFS.



One of the wrecked cable cars being hoisted from the water. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

► **First Neighbourhood Police Posts opened:**

Community policing started in 1983 with the introduction of the Neighbourhood Police Post (NPP)



Policemen reaching out to the community via patrols. Photo: Singapore Police Force

system. The system was largely an adaptation of the Japanese Koban system. The key operating principle of the Koban system or community policing is that the police should work closely with the community. NPP officers focused on basic police duties such as house visits, foot and bicycle patrols and community liaison work.

While the study into the Koban system began in 1981, the implementation of the NPP system began with the first NPP opening on 3 June 1983 in Toa Payoh. In total, eight NPPs were piloted in Toa Payoh in 1983 to assess the impact and success of the system in Singapore's environment.

1984

► **Singapore Civil Defence Force launches emergency number 995:**

On 7 February 1984, the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) launched the emergency number 995 to replace the old number. Previous numbers used include 5555, 328111 and 3378111.

► **Penal Code (Amendment) Act comes into effect:**

The Penal Code (Amendment) Act came into effect on 31 August 1984. The amendments reflected the Government's tough stance towards crime.

1986

► **Collapse of the Lian Yak Building:**

On 15 March 1986, the Lian Yak Building, more commonly known as Hotel New World, collapsed due to structural faults. 17 people were rescued and 33 lives were lost when



Rescuers working to extricate victims trapped under the rubble of the collapsed Hotel New World in 1986. Photo: Singapore Civil Defence Force

the six-storey building collapsed. The rescue operation involving more than 500 personnel from the SPF, SCDF, SFS, SAF and foreign experts lasted for four days.

While officers from the SFS and SCDF conducted search and rescue operations, the SPF investigated the cause of the collapse and narrowed down the missing persons list after carrying out checks with embassies and foreign counterparts.

► **10-year Singapore International Passports issued:**

As Singapore grew more secure in its sovereignty and began to participate in international commerce, its passport also evolved to keep in line with international standards. Both the international and restricted passports were redesigned according to the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) guidelines and the first passports were issued on 11 August 1986 and were valid for 10 years.

► **Civil Defence Act enacted:**

The Civil Defence Act was enacted on 14 November 1986. Among other things, it provided for the establishment, maintenance and discipline of a Civil Defence Force, as well as for the exercise of the functions and powers of the Force during national emergencies.

1988

► **Pulau Merlimau Fire:**

The largest oil refinery fire in Singapore's history broke out on 25 October 1988 on Pulau Merlimau. The fire lasted more than 113 hours and caused damage and loss of more than \$10 million.



A third naphtha tank catches fire on Pulau Merlimau. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

1989

► **Singapore Fire Service and Singapore Civil Defence Force integrated:**

On 15 April 1989, the Singapore Civil Defence Force and the Singapore Fire Service were formally integrated to form the Singapore Joint Civil Defence Force (SJCDF) due to the similarity in roles and functions of the two organisations. The SJCDF was subsequently renamed the Singapore Civil Defence Force.

► **United Nations Transition Assistance Group Peacekeeping Mission in Namibia:**

The Police Force sent a 21-man contingent to Namibia on 5 May 1989, to oversee Namibia's transition to independence. This was the first time Singapore was participating in a United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission. The peacekeeping force, during its one-year tour of duty, formed part of the 500-strong civilian police component of the UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG).

1990

► **Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (DART) formed:**

In May 1990, an elite team within the SCDF – the Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (DART) – was formed to handle complex rescue and firefighting incidents, such as Urban Search and Rescue (USAR), prolonged firefighting, height and confined space operations and water rescue.

► **Singapore Civil Defence Force's first overseas disaster relief operation:**

On 18 July 1990, SCDF carried out its first overseas disaster relief operation. A combined army and civil defence contingent was sent to Baguio, Philippines, following a massive earthquake. The SCDF rescue team was tasked to look for survivors in a four-storey building after the ground floor units collapsed in the earthquake.

1991

► Hijack of SQ117:

Singapore Airlines flight SQ117 was hijacked by four members of the Pakistan People's Party while on its way from Kuala Lumpur on 26 March 1991. After the plane landed at Changi Airport, police officers, including crack troopers from the Police Tactical Team, surrounded the plane. The Singapore Government activated a crisis management team consisting of representatives from MINDEF, MHA and other related organisations. Police negotiators attempted to persuade the hijackers to release the hostages. Commandos of the SAF mounted a rescue operation on 27 March 1991, killing all four hijackers and rescuing the 123 passengers and crew.



SQ117 on a runway at Changi Airport. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

1992

► Central Narcotics Bureau relocated:

In September 1992, the CNB Headquarters moved to 2 Outram Road (formerly Pearl's Hill Primary School).



Central Narcotics Bureau at Outram Road. Photo: Central Narcotics Bureau

► Special Operations Command formed:

On 10 September 1992, the Special Operations Command (SOC) was formed, integrating the Police Task Force, the Police Tactical Team and

the Police Dog Unit under one command. The integration of these three specialist units aimed to optimise operational capabilities.



A platoon from the elite Special Operations Command. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

1993

► Special Tactics and Rescue Squad (STAR) set up:

In Nov 1993, the Special Tactics and Rescue (STAR) Squad was commissioned to replace the Police Tactical Team. The new unit provides SPF with a dedicated and sophisticated armed response in a criminal hostage situation. The formation of STAR lays the foundation for building specialist expertise and tactical excellence in the SPF.



STAR unit taking cover behind a ballistic shield during a mock hostage-rescue operation. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

1994

► Fire Safety Act enacted:

The Fire Safety Act was enacted on 1 April 1994, becoming the main legislative instrument to ensure the fire safety of buildings in Singapore.

► Operation Dagnet:

In 1994, Operation Dagnet was launched to specifically target drug supervisees who had relapsed and gone into hiding.

1995

► Formation of the National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA):

The National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA) was set up in January 1995 as an advisory committee to MHA, to serve as an umbrella body to formulate anti-drug strategies and programmes. NCADA, as a citizen's advisory committee, comprises key members of the community and serves as a link between the community and the Government.

1996

► Operation Oriole:

Operation Oriole was conducted in 1996 to repatriate 99 Vietnamese refugees to Vietnam. The Government was acutely aware that there would be international embarrassment for Singapore if the operation was not managed professionally and sensitively. A task force comprising several MHA departments – MHA Headquarters (MHQ), SPF, Immigration Department and the Prisons Department – was formed to plan and execute the repatriation operation. On 27 June 1996, the 99 refugees returned to Vietnam.

1997

► Home Team concept launched:

The Home Team concept was launched in February 1997 by then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs Mr Wong Kan Seng. The Home Team concept centres around the idea that agencies in the Home Team have many purposes but have one shared mission in keeping Singapore safe and secure. As of 2015, the Home Team comprises 10 agencies:



Home Team logo. Photo: Ministry of Home Affairs

MHQ, SPF, ISD, SCDF, Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) (formed in 2003), Singapore Prison Service (SPS), CNB, Home Team Academy (HTA) (formed in 2006), Casino Regulatory Authority (CRA) (formed in 2008) and SCORE.

► Birth of Neighbourhood Police Centres:

The Neighbourhood Police Centre (NPC) system was set up to offer a one-stop policing centre for the community, in view of rising expectations of both the public and police officers and the need to integrate the essential police functions into a single delivery process including fast response, investigation, proactive policing and counter services. NPC officers' functions include responding to 999 calls and on-scene investigations. Community liaison work was expanded to working with community partners on community safety and security programmes. The first NPC, Queenstown NPC, opened its doors on 1 October 1997 and was officially opened on 20 December 1997.



COPS officers at work in the community. Photo: Singapore Police Force

1998

► Singapore's second link with Malaysia opens:

Tuas Checkpoint, Singapore's second link with Malaysia, was opened for operation on 2 January 1998. It was officially opened on 18 April 1998 by Singapore's then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong with his counterpart, Dr Mahathir Mohamed, who was then Prime Minister of Malaysia.

► Singapore Immigration & Registration formed:

Singapore Immigration and the National Registration Department were merged on 1 April 1998 to form Singapore Immigration & Registration (SIR).

1999

► Civil Defence Academy opens:

The Civil Defence Academy (CDA), the premier training institute of the SCDF, began operations in March 1999 to conduct all professional and specialised training in the field of civil defence.



The Civil Defence Academy. Photo: Singapore Civil Defence Force

► The Prisons Department unveils new vision:

In November 1999, the Prisons Department unveiled its revised vision statement:

"We aspire to be captains in the lives of offenders committed to our custody. We will be instrumental in steering them towards being responsible citizens with the help of their families and the community. We will thus build a secure and exemplary prison system."

The vision crystallised Prison's goal to be "captains in the lives of offenders". The new mission statement restates the core functions of secure custody and rehabilitation but contains two new elements – prevention and aftercare.

2000

► The Home Team Sector concept is established:

To deepen the spirit of collaboration among Home Team departments, all Home Team ground units such as police stations and fire stations were divided into four geographical Sectors – North, South, East and West. A fifth, the Maritime Sector, was added in 2010. The Home Team Sectors enable ground officers from different departments to work together on joint operations, training and community engagement initiatives.

► Police Leverages Technology:

By the turn of the millennium, tools to gear up for new challenges and demands in the new era operating environment were gradually

rolled out by the Singapore Police Force. These include Cubicon (an integrated computerised link between patrol cars and operations rooms for the planning, organising, directing and monitoring of operations); C-CRIS (Computerised Criminal Records Intelligence System); CRIMES II (Computerised Investigation Management Systems); and an updated AFIS II (Automated Fingerprint Identification System).



The Automated Fingerprint identification system (AFIS). Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

► The Commercial Affairs Department is formed:

The Commercial Affairs Department of the Ministry of Finance and Criminal Investigation Department's (CID) Commercial Crime Division were reconstituted in January 2000 as the Commercial Affairs Department within the SPF to enhance Singapore's capabilities in handling commercial crime and fraud.

► The Kaki Bukit Centre (Prison School) is set up:

The Kaki Bukit Centre (Prison School), a centralised school for inmates, was formed, centralising all teaching resources and providing a conducive environment for learning. Some of the programmes it offers include academic (GCE "N", "O" and "A" levels) and vocational courses, as well as life-skills programmes and enrichment activities.



Inmates using the computer lab at Kaki Bukit Centre. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

► Launch of the Light Fire Attack Vehicle:

The Light Fire Attack Vehicle (LFAV), more affectionately known as the Red Rhino, was conceptualised and designed in-house by the SCDF to meet the challenges posed by a highly urbanised Singapore with narrow streets and buildings in close proximity to one another.

The four-wheel-drive Red Rhino can access narrow streets, negotiate tight corners and even go off-road when, for example, responding to bush fires during the dry season. It comes complete with breathing apparatus sets, cutting, breaking and rescue tools as well as firefighting accessories.

A fifth generation Red Rhino (LF5G) was launched in November 2015.



The fifth generation Red Rhino. Photo: Singapore Civil Defence Force

2001

► Ministry of Home Affairs Headquarters moves to New Phoenix Park:

The Ministry Headquarters, together with the Police Headquarters, moved from Tanglin Road to New Phoenix Park at 28 Irrawaddy Road on 18 August 2001.



MHA Headquarters at New Phoenix Park. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

2002

► The Home Team mission is revised and Home Team values introduced:

The revised Home Team mission, "We work as a team, in partnership with the community, to make Singapore our safe and secure best home" and the Home Team values of Honour and Unity were introduced.

2003

► Immigration & Checkpoints Authority formed:

SIR and the checkpoint control functions of CED merged on 1 April 2003 to form the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) to strengthen border controls in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

► Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome:

The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) reached Singapore in February 2003, with the return of three women who had caught the virus in Hong Kong. By the end of the outbreak, Singapore had 283 confirmed cases of SARS and 33 fatalities.

The SARS outbreak involved a massive joint operation between the different Home Team Departments. Departments involved included the then newly formed ICA, SCDF, SPF, CNB and SPS as well as a Home Team statutory board, SCORE.

ICA stepped up checks on persons passing through Singapore to prevent the trans-border spreading of SARS; SCDF transported persons with SARS symptoms to the hospital; investigators from SPF's CID and CNB were deployed to do contact tracing; SPS stood by to house sentenced Home Quarantine Orders breakers; and the SCORE laundry department ensured that hospitals had a ready supply of clean linen.

SPF officers also projected a reassuring presence on the streets and enforced the Home Quarantine Orders.

2004

► **Nicoll Highway Incident:**  
On 20 April 2004, a tunnel that was under construction as part of the Mass Rapid Transit's (MRT) Circle Line caved in, causing a section of the Nicoll Highway to collapse. The collapse led to four fatalities, and one body was never recovered. The Home Team immediately activated a search and rescue operation, comprising SCDF and SPF. The complex rescue operation required the DART personnel to conduct both ground and underwater search and rescue work. Rescue operations lasted four days before it was called off when conditions became too risky for the rescue team to carry on with its search.



Sniffer dogs look for victims in the rubble. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

► **Official launch of Changi Prison Complex Cluster A:**  
On 16 August 2004, the Changi Prison Cluster A, a part of the Changi Prison Complex, was officially opened. Cluster A has five blocks with a combined capacity of 5,300 inmates. Inmates from Changi Prison, Jalan Awan Prison, Moon Crescent Prison and the Reformative Training Centre moved into Cluster A. The cluster concept enabled better management of inmates, more efficient resource utilisation, and facilitated technological and infrastructural innovation.

► **The Yellow Ribbon Project is launched:**  
The Yellow Ribbon Project was launched by SPS and SCORE in October 2004 to offer a second chance to ex-offenders by inspiring community action to support rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

Yellow Ribbon Project Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

2006

► **Amendments to Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) comes into effect:**  
The 2006 amendments to the MDA included arming of officers, extension of supervision order and DNA collection.

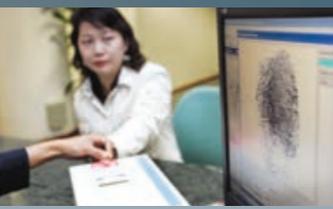
► **Enhanced Immigration Automated Clearance System introduced:**  
The enhanced Immigration Automated Clearance System (eIACS) was introduced. A world's first, the eIACS enables Singapore citizens who have registered for their National Registration Identity Card, and who have valid machine-readable Singapore passports, to clear immigration via automated gates without having to separately register to use the facility.



The eIACS reads passports and scans thumbprints. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

► **Buprenorphine listed as a controlled drug:**  
The listing of buprenorphine as a Class A controlled drug as of 14 August 2006 is a move that reaffirmed and solidified the zero-tolerance stance towards drug control in Singapore. Buprenorphine was previously used legally for substitution therapy.

► **Singapore Biometric Passports introduced:**  
The Singapore Biometric Passport (BioPass), officially launched on 15 August 2006, is a passport which contains unique biometric identifiers such as fingerprint data, facial image and passport details on a contactless chip.



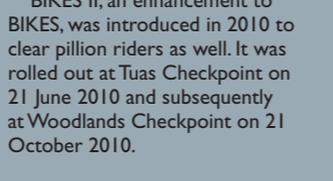
The BioPass contains a computer chip embedded with thumbprints. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

► **The Home Team Academy officially opens:**  
The Home Team Academy (HTA), the training arm of the Home Team, was officially opened in September 2006. With the exception of the SCDF, which has its own training school at CDA, the training schools of the other Home Team Departments are co-located within HTA's premises. These include the Police Training Command, Immigration & Checkpoints Authority Training School, Prison Staff Training School and Central Narcotics Bureau Training School. HTA also houses dormitories for Home Team trainees and Police National Servicemen.

HTA is also home to the Home Team Training Village which houses simulated facilities for trainees to undergo scenario-based training.

► **Biometric Identification of Motorbikers System (BIKES) introduced:**  
A world's first, BIKES uses biometric and human detection technology to automate the immigration clearance of preregistered single travellers on motorcycles. It was launched at the Tuas Checkpoint in October 2006 and Woodlands Checkpoint in February 2007.

BIKES II, an enhancement to BIKES, was introduced in 2010 to clear pillion riders as well. It was rolled out at Tuas Checkpoint on 21 June 2010 and subsequently at Woodlands Checkpoint on 21 October 2010.



Motorcyclists have their thumbprints scanned by a biometric reader. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

2008

► **The Casino Regulatory Authority is formed:**  
The Casino Regulatory Authority was formed in 2008 to ensure that the management and operation of casinos in Singapore remain free from criminal influence and exploitation. Its responsibilities include ensuring that casinos are conducted honestly, and that they do not cause harm to minors, vulnerable persons and the society at large.

► **The Home Team Gallery is officially opened:**  
Located within the Home Team Academy, the Home Team Gallery (HTG) has two levels of exhibits, including a mezzanine floor featuring various Home Team joint operations. In July 2015, a new exhibit featuring the development of Home Team firearms was launched. Among other things, the gallery aims to foster a common Home Team identity in all Home Team officers by imparting the Home Team values of Honour and Unity.

2009

► **The Tuas Protective & Analytical Facility (PAF) officially opens:**  
A world's first, the Tuas PAF incorporates Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Explosive (CBRE) detection capabilities at a border crossing checkpoint which operates round the clock. It was officially opened by Mr Wong Kan Seng, the Minister for Home Affairs then, on 20 January 2009.



Mr Wong Kan Seng (right) listening to an explanation given by Dr Lee Fook Kay (second from left), regarding the newly opened Protective and Analytical Facility. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

► **Formation of the Public Transport Security Command:**  
The Public Transport Security Command (TransCom) was officially commissioned in August 2009 to assume security planning, general policing and contingency planning in the public transport domain.



TransCom patrol. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

2010

► **Opening of Cluster B at Changi Prison Complex:**  
Cluster B is the second cluster to be built under the Changi Prison Complex blueprint. It was fully operational in August 2009 and officially opened in 2010. It comprises five purpose-built high-rise institutions, an administration block and a security entrance block. Cluster B also includes the admissions centre and pre-release centre, and houses about 5,500 inmates.



Cluster B, Changi Prison Complex. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

2011

► **Pulau Bukom Shell Refinery Fire:**  
On 28 September 2011, fire broke out at an oil refinery owned by Royal Dutch Shell on Pulau Bukom. The blaze began near a system of pipelines carrying petroleum products. The SCDF reached Pulau Bukom within 35 minutes of activation, with 100 firefighters and equipment including

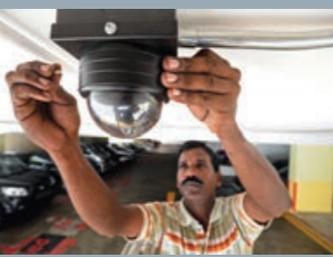
fire engines, fire bikes, a Red Rhino Light Fire Attack Vehicle, and other support vehicles. SCDF firefighters worked with Shell's Company Emergency Response Team (CERT) to fight the fire.



Pulau Bukom Shell Refinery Fire. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

2012

► **Launch of Community Policing System:**  
The Community Policing System (COPS) was first rolled out in May 2012 at Tampines Neighbourhood Police Centre (NPC) and Bukit Merah East NPC. Representing the next generation in frontline policing, more police officers are deployed on the ground to actively engage the community and to tailor crime prevention measures for neighbourhoods. In this way, COPS enables police-community bonds to be strengthened.



High-tech security cameras are being installed in the first phase of the Community Policing System. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

2013

► **The Home Team Operation Clusters framework is introduced:**  
The Home Team Operation Clusters framework evolved from the Home Team Sector concept,

as Home Team collaborations have been restructured along MHA's key functional areas for greater operational synergy. The four clusters are Public Security, Maritime Security, Border Security, and Drug Control. The existing North, South, East and West Sectors were subsumed under the Public Security Cluster.

► **Little India riot:**  
The Little India riot occurred on Sunday, 8 December 2013, following a fatal traffic accident along Race Course Road. Some 300 rioters took part in this unrest, the worst case of public violence in Singapore since 1969. About 240 SPF officers, including those from the Special Operations Command (SOC), and 56 SCDF officers were deployed to the scene and quelled the riot in two hours without loss of life.



Little India riot. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

► **Further amendments to the Misuse of Drugs Act:**  
There were further amendments to the MDA to empower CNB with further and wider powers to deal with the fast-evolving drug situation and to enhance CNB's operational effectiveness. The changes, among others, include a review of the mandatory death penalty regime, where the court is given the discretion to decide the sentence imposed (life imprisonment and caning or the death sentence) if specific conditions are met. Other changes include enhanced penalties for trafficking to the young or vulnerable, enhanced penalties for repeat drug traffickers, and the introduction of hair analysis to enhance detection and deterrence.

2014

► **Operationalisation of the Mandatory Aftercare Scheme and the Conditional Remission System:**  
An amendment to the Prisons Act on 1 July 2014 introduced the Conditional Remission System (CRS) and the Mandatory Aftercare Scheme (MAS) to further strengthen SPS' system of through-care and improve the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-inmates into society.

2015

► **Launch of the Integrated Checkpoints Command:**  
The Integrated Checkpoints Command (ICC) was first launched on 2 January 2015 at the Land Domain as part of the Home Team's continuous efforts to enhance Singapore's checkpoints security. This was followed by the ICC at the Sea Domain on 1 April 2015 and lastly at the Air Domain on 1 October 2015. The ICC is another milestone for the Home Team, further strengthening the coordination and synergy among the different Home Team agencies, including the SPF, ICA and CNB, working at the checkpoints.

► **Launch of the Community Rehabilitation Centre:**  
Following the implementation of Enhanced Supervision for high-risk drug offenders in November 2012, SPS enhanced the rehabilitation regime for new young drug abusers. A Community Rehabilitation Centre (CRC) was established on 26 January 2015 as a step-down arrangement for these abusers after they have served a short period of detention in the Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC).



Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Senior Minister of State for Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs, and Ms Sim Ann, Minister of State, Ministry of Education & Ministry of Communications and Information, speaking to some residents at the CRC. Photo: Singapore Press Holdings

<b>A/INSP</b>	Acting Inspector	<b>COL</b>	Colonel	<b>IC</b>	identity card	<b>NCADA</b>	National Council Against Drug Abuse	<b>SANA</b>	Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association	<b>UFM</b>	Unmanned Firefighting Machine
<b>AC</b>	Assistant Commissioner	<b>COPS</b>	Community Policing System	<b>ICA</b>	Immigrations & Checkpoints Authority	<b>NCPC</b>	National Crime Prevention Council	<b>SAPU</b>	Special Action Prison Unit	<b>UNTAG</b>	UN Transition Assistance Group
<b>ACG</b>	Aftercare Group	<b>CPM</b>	Communist Party of Malaya	<b>ICAO</b>	International Civil Aviation Organisation	<b>NDP</b>	National Day Parade	<b>SARS</b>	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome	<b>USAR</b>	Urban Search and Rescue
<b>AED</b>	automated external defibrillator	<b>CPT</b>	Captain	<b>ICC</b>	Integrated Checkpoints Command	<b>NPC</b>	Neighbourhood Police Centre	<b>SB</b>	Special Branch	<b>VC</b>	Vigilante Corps
<b>AFIS</b>	Automated Fingerprint Identification System	<b>CRA</b>	Casino Regulatory Authority	<b>ICD</b>	International Cooperation Department	<b>NPCC</b>	National Police Cadet Corp	<b>SCDF</b>	Singapore Civil Defence Force	<b>VSC</b>	Volunteer Special Constabulary
<b>AMP</b>	Association of Muslim Professionals	<b>CRC</b>	Community Rehabilitation Centre	<b>IDA</b>	Infocomm Development Authority	<b>NPP</b>	Neighbourhood Police Post	<b>SCORE</b>	Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises	<b>VUCA</b>	volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous (conditions)
<b>ARDEX</b>	ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise	<b>CRIMES</b>	Computerised Investigation Management Systems	<b>IGCI</b>	INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation	<b>NRD</b>	National Registration Department	<b>SCW</b>	Senior Chief Warder	<b>WIT</b>	Work Improvement Team
<b>ASP</b>	Assistant Superintendent	<b>CRS</b>	Conditional Remission System	<b>INSARAG</b>	International Search and Rescue Advisory Group	<b>NS</b>	National Service	<b>SFB</b>	Singapore Fire Brigade	<b>WO</b>	Warrant Officer
<b>BIKES</b>	Biometric Identification of Motorbikers	<b>CSSP</b>	Community Safety and Security Programme	<b>IO</b>	investigation officer	<b>NSF</b>	Full-time National Serviceman	<b>SFS</b>	Singapore Fire Service	<b>WO II</b>	Warrant Officer II
<b>BioPass</b>	Biometric Passport	<b>Cubicon</b>	integrated computerised link between patrol cars and operations rooms	<b>IPPT</b>	Individual Physical Proficiency Test	<b>OC</b>	Officer-in-Charge	<b>SIR</b>	Singapore Immigration & Registration	<b>WOW awards</b>	Annual award to recognise officers who have delivered outstanding service to their customers, which may have gone unnoticed or did not receive any written compliments
<b>C-CRIS</b>	Computerised Criminal Records Intelligence System	<b>DART</b>	Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team	<b>ISA</b>	Internal Security Act	<b>OODA</b>	observe the situation, orient self, decide, and then act	<b>SJCDF</b>	Singapore Joint Civil Defence Force		
<b>C2</b>	command and control	<b>DRC</b>	Drug Rehabilitation Centre	<b>ISD</b>	Internal Security Department	<b>ORNSmen</b>	Operationally Ready National Servicemen	<b>SOC</b>	Special Operations Command		
<b>CARE</b>	Community Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex-offenders	<b>DSP</b>	Deputy Superintendent	<b>ISIS</b>	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria	<b>PA</b>	People's Association	<b>SPEAR Force</b>	Singapore Prison Emergency Action Response Force		
<b>CBD</b>	Central Business District	<b>eIACS</b>	enhanced Immigration Automated Clearance System	<b>Jl</b>	Jemaah Islamiyah	<b>PAF</b>	Protective & Analytical Facility	<b>SPF</b>	Singapore Police Force		
<b>CBRE</b>	Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Explosive	<b>EMT</b>	emergency medical technician	<b>LF5G</b>	fifth generation Red Rhino	<b>PCG</b>	Police Coast Guard	<b>SPS</b>	Singapore Prison Service		
<b>CDA</b>	Civil Defence Academy	<b>EPC</b>	Emergency Preparedness Centre	<b>LFAV</b>	Light Fire Attack Vehicle	<b>PDT</b>	Police Defence Tactics	<b>SRSC</b>	Singapore Road Safety Council		
<b>CDC</b>	Community Development Council	<b>FBI</b>	Federal Bureau of Investigation	<b>LTA</b>	Lieutenant	<b>Pergas</b>	Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers' Association	<b>SSGT</b>	Staff Sergeant		
<b>CD</b>	Customs and Excise Department	<b>Flexi-I</b>	Flexible-Immigration Clearance System	<b>LTC</b>	Lieutenant Colonel	<b>PNS</b>	Police National Service	<b>SSI</b>	Senior Station Inspector		
<b>CERT</b>	Company Emergency Response Team	<b>FRC</b>	Fast Response Car	<b>MAS</b>	Mandatory Aftercare Scheme	<b>PNSman</b>	Police National Serviceman	<b>SSSGT</b>	Senior Staff Sergeant		
<b>CI</b>	Checkpoint Inspector	<b>FTB</b>	Force Transport Branch	<b>MDA</b>	Misuse of Drugs Act	<b>POCC</b>	Police Operations Command Centre	<b>STAR Unit /Squad</b>	Special Tactics and Rescue Unit/Squad		
<b>CID</b>	Criminal Investigation Department	<b>HazMat</b>	hazardous materials	<b>MHA</b>	Ministry of Home Affairs	<b>PR</b>	Protect & Restrain	<b>SUPT</b>	Superintendent		
<b>Cisco</b>	Commercial and Industrial Security Corporation	<b>HCV</b>	Hazmat Control Vehicle	<b>MHQ</b>	Ministry Headquarters	<b>RRG</b>	Religious Rehabilitation Group	<b>TAV</b>	Tactical Vehicle		
<b>CNB</b>	Central Narcotics Bureau	<b>HDB</b>	Housing and Development Board	<b>MID</b>	Ministry of the Interior and Defence	<b>RSIS</b>	S Rajaratnam School of International Studies	<b>TP</b>	Traffic Police		
<b>CO</b>	Commanding Officer	<b>HT</b>	Home Team	<b>MINDEF</b>	Ministry of Defence	<b>SAC</b>	Senior Assistant Commissioner	<b>TransCom</b>	Public Transport Security Command		
		<b>HTA</b>	Home Team Academy	<b>MNLF</b>	Malayan National Liberation Front	<b>SACA</b>	Singapore Aftercare Association	<b>UAV</b>	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle		
		<b>HTG</b>	Home Team Gallery	<b>MRT</b>	Mass Rapid Transit	<b>SAF</b>	Singapore Armed Forces				

