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**SPEECH BY MR WONG KAN SENG, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS,
AT THE GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY OF
THE EXTENSION TO THE EXISTING COMMERCIAL AND
INDUSTRIAL SECURITY CORPORATION (CISCO) BUILDING
ON WEDNESDAY, 2 MARCH 1994 AT 10.30 AM**

Singaporeans enjoy a relatively safe environment, with low and declining crime rates. This state of affairs did not come about by chance. Rather, it has been achieved through a combination of tough anti-crime laws, vigilant Police enforcement and - just as importantly - keen public support.

We must, however, not be complacent. Criminals are always on the prowl to outsmart society, be it through cloning of handphones, credit card fraud or the more cruder forms of theft and assault. While it is not possible to completely rid society of persons with criminal intent, it is possible to place obstacles in their path so as to minimise the opportunity for crime.

Although the overall picture is satisfactory, there are some areas of concern. Crimes in non-residential premises have increased. For instance, housebreaking cases at commercial and industrial premises climbed by almost 20 per cent, from 1,433 cases in 1992 to 1,717 cases last year. Robberies at such premises increased by 12 per cent over the same period, from 213 cases to 239 cases. Construction worksites, in particular, are a favourite haunt for criminals. Last year, such worksites recorded 31 cases of robbery, twice that of 1992. And murder at worksites rose to 16 cases, three times that of the previous year's five cases.

Management's Responsibility to Reduce Opportunity for Crime:

These figures suggest that something is wrong in the attitude of some quarters of the corporate community towards security. A recent example is illustrative. You have all probably read about the break-in at the Bedok POSBank during the Lunar New Year holidays when burglars stole \$180,000 from the bank's Automated Teller Machine (ATM). Police investigations showed that in the early hours of 12 February, the security company's central alarm station detected a telephone line fault in the bank's alarm system. This was conveyed to the bank's duty officer. However, both the alarm monitoring station and the duty officer apparently had assumed that it was a normal technical fault and failed to find out the cause of the fault immediately. There are also inadequacies in the security system of the premises resulting in the break-in being carried out without much difficulty by the culprits. All these led to the undesirable consequences of a crime being committed.

Without doubt, the managements of commercial and industrial premises and construction worksites have a key responsibility to minimise the opportunity for crime. They must take all necessary steps to ensure that their premises are adequately protected from break-ins and robberies. It is in their own interest to do so.

At construction worksites in particular, the managements should see to it that security personnel employed are not being unfairly exposed to risk of injury. They must also ensure that their worksite quarters do not become a refuge for criminals, illegal immigrants and overstayers. The recent Police arrest of some foreign criminals and overstayers at a worksite quarters, where stolen construction equipment and an assortment of offensive weapons were also recovered, underlines this.

Other parties, like insurance companies, for instance, can contribute as well. Some insurers already peg their premium rates to the level of security measures adopted, charging higher

premiums for those who are lax about security. Others should follow this practice. Insurance companies can also go one step further and insist that adequate security measures are adopted before they provide the insurance cover.

The security industry, on its part, must also continue to upgrade to meet the constantly changing needs of the commercial and industrial sectors. As an industry frontrunner, the Commercial and Industrial Security Corporation (CISCO) has paved the way towards high standards. It is time that others in the security industry, especially the numerous smaller firms, follow suit. They should make better use of modern-day security systems. The security personnel they provide must also be properly selected and trained. Otherwise they will be no match for the criminal.

CISCO's development offers useful insights. Formed in 1972 to provide armed guards and other security services, CISCO was not spared the increasing labour costs as the economy grew. It responded by reducing its dependence on manpower and expanding its range of security services to include equipment-based security. The combination of sophisticated technology and trained men provided a cost-effective solution without compromising on good security standards.

The proposed extension of the CISCO building is testimony to the corporation's forward-looking approach in its quest to continually expand and improve its services to meet market needs. I understand that the new building is designed to meet CISCO's unique operational requirements. Its purpose-built facilities include cash processing and storage areas and a computer disaster recovery centre.

I congratulate CISCO on its resolve to being an exemplary leader in the field of security services. Other players in the security industry should likewise move with the times and upgrade their capabilities.

Public Support Ever-so Important:

Before I end, I would like to briefly touch on the importance of the public's support in deterring and solving crime. Singaporeans have, over the years, recognised the wisdom of taking simple steps to prevent crime against themselves and their property. In addition, they have shown a level of support and co-operation with the Police which is most commendable. It is indeed telling that consistently, about a third - 33.6 per cent for last year - of arrests for major offences were public-assisted. It will be a win-win situation for both the Police and law-abiding citizens if this level of support can be maintained, or better still improved on.

There will always be gaps in society's efforts to stay ahead of the criminal. With a strong partnership between the Police, management and members of the public, we will be better able to close these gaps and keep Singapore as crime-free as possible.

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