

Home Team Connects

Connecting You with the Home Team

An initiative by the Home Team Volunteer Network



EDITOR'S PICK

HTVN WEBINAR: CONNECTING YOU WITH THE HOME TEAM

The Home Team Volunteer Network (HTVN) organised its third webinar via Zoom on 24 February evening. Titled *Staying Vigilant Against Scams, SPF* colleagues shared useful tips on how to avoid being scammed.

Other highlights include Q&A segment related to the topic and dialogue session with both Co-Chairmen of HTVN, MOS Desmond Tan and A/P Ho Peng Kee.

For Home Team volunteers who did not manage to join us, fret not as there will be more to come!

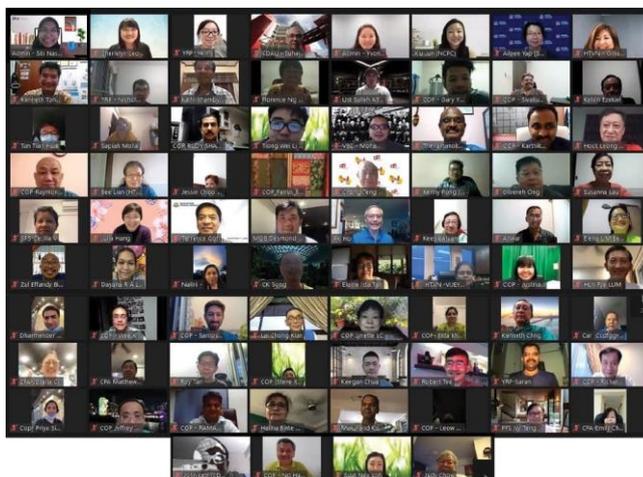


Photo: [HTVN Facebook](#)

HIGHLIGHTS

'HTVN ASKS' WITH MOS DESMOND TAN

MOS Desmond Tan, Co-Chairman of the Home Team Volunteer Network (HTVN), takes on questions relating to HTVN and even a little bit about himself.

Thank you to all Home Team Volunteers for the questions asked via our Facebook and Instagram stories.

>> [Check out the Q&A on HTVN FB](#)



START FROM YOUNG

On 19th February, SCDF held the finale of its Junior Civil Defence Lionhearter Challenge virtually on Zoom. The Challenge saw close to 150 students from 28 primary schools participating in a series of cool lifesaving activities and Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, Chairman of the Home Team Volunteer Network, graced the virtual event. Great work, everyone!

#ANationOfLifesavers

>> [Check out highlights from the Challenge on SCDF FB](#)



PHOTO: SCDF

At the COS Debate in Parliament on 1 March 2021, Minister K Shanmugam, Second Minister Josephine Teo, Minister of State Assoc Prof Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim and Minister of State Desmond Tan outlined key initiatives undertaken by the Home Team to keep Singapore safe and secure.

Minister Shanmugam opened his speech by addressing a question from Leader of the Opposition Mr Pritam Singh: "Is there a danger that laws and policies could be tilted towards particular religious beliefs by top civil servants, if not now, maybe sometime in the future?"

In his reply, Minister Shanmugam noted the principles of Singapore's approach to such matters and affirmed the integrity of our Public Service.

MINISTER SHANMUGAM'S REPLY ON THE INTEGRITY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE



Mr Singh will accept, when his words are transmitted to the public, many will interpret him, in essence, saying that top civil servants could be biased, and they could act in favour of religious communities, because of their own religious beliefs, both now and in the future.

I would say, leaving the public with that impression about our current top civil servants will be seriously wrong.

They are persons who have dedicated their entire lives to public service, loyally and faithfully.

If there is evidence of such a lack of integrity amongst current senior civil servants, then I agree, it should be raised and we must deal with it.

If the statement was meant only to cover a future possibility, without any hint or suggestion of a lack of integrity amongst current top civil servants, then that should have been made crystal clear.

Since Mr Singh has raised an issue relating to one of the key foundations of Singapore, and one of the key foundations of our success, that is – the integrity of our senior civil servants. Let me state the position categorically and quite starkly.

The basic principle we follow and apply is that which Mr Lee Kuan Yew had set out in August 1965, and I quote: "We are going to have a multi-racial nation in Singapore. We will set the example. This is not a Malay nation; this is not a Chinese nation; this is not

I don't forget what I said in 2003 about leavening the effects of meritocracy by taking into account the position of minorities. What I say now can stand together with, and be qualified by, what I said in 2003. Though the latter point, I emphasise, is a purely personal view.

Take another officer, beyond the two I've mentioned – Esa Masood. He graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was formerly Deputy Director in the Ministry of Education and Director at the Early Childhood Development Agency. Now, he is Chief Executive of MUIS. One day he will go back to the Civil Service. He should be assessed on the basis of the quality of his work and not on the basis of the quality or nature of his religious beliefs.

And that goes across the Public Service. For me, when a Police officer attends to a call at a house, you don't want people to think, "this is a Muslim officer", or "Christian officer", or "a Hindu officer". You want people to think, "this a Singapore Police Force officer".

I personally keep close track of trust levels in our Police Force. They are now extremely high. And we don't want to get to the levels in some First World countries where people march in the streets to abolish the Police force because of racial issues.

It is not accidental that we have one of the highest levels of racial harmony in the world.

That is the present. The quality of our Civil Service, their integrity, is a key reason why Singapore has succeeded.

But I also want to acknowledge, many of us have our own religious beliefs. Not everyone is, or can be expected to be, a saint. Sometimes, there can be a tendency to see things through a religious lens or a personal perspective, and that can apply to all – Ministers, civil servants, ground

an Indian nation. Everyone will have his place: equal; language, culture, religion.”

Freedom of Religion is guaranteed. But in the public sphere, in public policymaking, we don't make decisions which favour any one or other religious group.

Neutrality and fairness are essential. Otherwise, in this small place, we will lose the trust of the people quickly. That goes for Cabinet Ministers, senior civil servants, and the Public Service as a whole. And when these principles are not observed, they must be dealt with.

The situation today, for the past 62 years, these principles – secularity, neutrality between religions – have been one of the Golden Threads in our public policymaking.

That is one of the key reasons Singapore is where it is now.

My Ministry, in particular, has a direct role in dealing with issues relating to race and religion. We formulate and implement policies which deal with these issues.

I have, over the years, worked with many senior civil servants, Permanent Secretaries, and Directors of the Internal Security Department (ISD).

The current Head of Civil Service was my Permanent Secretary in Home Affairs. Outstanding officer. Unimpeachable integrity.

He has given more than 35 years, his entire adult working life, in the service of this country, for the betterment of Singaporeans.

It would be most unfair if he and his colleagues are tainted with the suspicion of religious bias without proof.

I emphasise, I am referring to the impressions that Mr Singh's words will leave with many, and not what he may have actually meant. How the words could be understood, does matter.

My current Permanent Secretary was Director ISD, Permanent Secretary of Law, then Permanent Secretary of Transport. 28 years in Public Service. Again, an outstanding officer who is driven by only one aim, which is to make the lives of Singaporeans better. Since last year, he has been working his guts out, leading the Homefront Crisis Executive Group (HCEG), coordinating and managing our pandemic response so that Singaporeans can be safe.

We look for officers of this character and caliber, and they should not in any way be tainted with suggestions of religious bias in their approach.

officers. We have to guard against that, we have to avoid it, leave personal viewpoints, and look at it when you are making public policy through a secular perspective, on what is the interest. You will be informed by your religious beliefs, but you have to look at the broad majority, and see what is in their interest.

We have to jealously guard against any such tendency to look through a particular lens, whether it is Ministers or anyone else, and we have to set the tone from the very top, insist on the secular approach and be strict about that.

Mr Singh is reflecting on, I think, what some people might feel, and I will say to him today that it is not a systemic issue, and we have to guard against it. And what is the safeguard? It starts with politics, how we conduct it. And religion – how important do we make it in politics? In the midst, do we dog whistle? Let's be honest and ask, how often have speeches done that in this House? It is the responsibility on both sides of the House.

You want an example of where it can lead to? Look at the United States, how votes are sought along religious lines. If we go down that road, we will be in trouble.

Mr Singh also asks, “what of the future?”

I will make two points. One, we have, over the years, developed institutions, a system – the Public Service Commission (PSC), Public Service Division (PSD), rules that seek to promote the best officers and weed out those whose integrity is not clear.

The assessments are multi-faceted and we have safeguarded the independence of the PSC, because the degradation of the Civil Service will seriously damage Singapore.

Second, having said that, my second point is, to be blunt, whether the senior Civil Service remains world-class and has integrity, depends ultimately on who the Ministers are too. The timbre of our Ministers will ultimately decide everything else.

I have highlighted officers from my Ministry in particular, because we are at the forefront of dealing with religious issues. We meet different religious leaders, we work hard to preserve religious harmony amongst the different faiths.

Our integrity, honesty, reliability and neutrality are key to us and those are the currency we deal in. Whether the people we work with accept us depends on these factors.

And this is important in another central way: We promote officers on merit. You don't want other questions to be asked – what is his religion, what is his race? Once we ask those questions for promotion, I think we will be in trouble.

If the Ministers are biased, they lack of integrity, that will spread. Maybe slowly, but surely. The institutions that we have set up can delay the spread. It may depend on how long the top remains bad, but it won't be a happy situation.

We have avoided these outcomes so far and you only have to look at some countries outside of Singapore, many countries including First World countries, to see what can go wrong and how quickly.

**Minister K Shanmugam:
Safeguarding Singapore and Serving Our People
Through Home Team Transformation**

Leveraging technology to enhance operational response

- Use analytics to detect, deter and solve crimes, and respond to incidents more effectively

Augmenting frontline responders with drones and robotics

- Deploy robots and drones to complement ground operations

Transforming to deliver better services for all

- Transform service delivery to the public with more convenient, tech-enabled service touchpoints and platforms

Transforming workforce for the future

- Build competencies of Home Team officers to better exploit new technology
- Integrate technology to deliver training that is more effective and realistic

Growing manpower needs

- Build core of science and tech experts to keep pace with changing technologies and evolving threats
- Grow Home Team's manpower and increase the number of Police investigators as cases have become more complex

[Read the Speech by Minister K Shanmugam](#)

**Second Minister Josephine Teo:
Keeping Singapore Safe in the Evolving Security Environment**

Safeguarding against terrorism	Safeguarding Singapore against foreign interference in domestic politics	Strengthening protection from online harms
		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share intelligence and disrupt terrorist plots by working closely with foreign security agencies• Encourage the public to report suspicious activities• Constantly refine rehabilitation approach for detainees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and enhance legal frameworks to safeguard Singapore against foreign interference and counter hostile information campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Study experiences and regulatory models in other countries• Review options such as introducing new legislation to deal with online harms effectively

[Read the Speech by Second Minister Josephine Teo](#)

**Minister of State Assoc Prof Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim:
Combating Drug Abuse; Strengthening Rehabilitation and Reintegration**

Strengthening Singapore's approach in the fight against drugs	Strengthening rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders
	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen Preventive Drug Education (PDE) and outreach to combat liberal narratives on drugs• Amend the Misuse of Drugs Act to enhance enforcement capabilities against New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner the community to provide offenders with sustained throughcare support• Enhance the capacity and capability of volunteers to better support inmates and ex-offenders• Upgrade skills and enhance employability of ex-offenders

[Read the Speech by Minister of State Assoc Prof Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim](#)

Minister of State Desmond Tan:
Securing Singapore with the Community

Partnering stakeholders to combat scams	Reviewing key policies and legislation for private security agencies	Strengthening protection for vulnerable road users
		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inter-Ministry Committee on Scams (IMCS) will deepen partnerships with community and private stakeholders such as banks, telcos and digital platforms, to raise awareness and strengthen defences against scams	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop the new Security Agencies Competency Evaluation (SACE) framework• Amend the Private Security Industry Act to protect security officers against abuse when carrying out their duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce additional measures to better protect vulnerable road users such as elderly pedestrians and students, by increasing the penalties for motorists who commit offences at pedestrian crossings or offences that endanger pedestrian safety in Silver Zones and School Zones

[Read the Speech by Minister of State Desmond Tan](#)

A MESSAGE FROM OUR MINISTER

On 25th February, MIN K Shanmugam and 2MIN Josephine Teo spoke to the media about the case of foreign domestic worker Ms Piang Ngaih Don. These are MIN Shanmugam's remarks in full.

I want to be restrained in my comments.

In Mdm Gaiyathiri's case, she has admitted to the facts, she has pleaded guilty, but the sentencing has been adjourned. Her husband, a Police officer, Chelvam, and Gaiyathiri's mother, are both facing charges. Their cases haven't been heard yet. So, we need to be careful in what we say, because the cases have not been disposed of.

But I do want to register the following. The facts admitted in court by Mdm Gaiyathiri when she pleaded guilty, show extreme inhumanity, extreme cruelty. I'm sure I speak for many Singaporeans when I express our complete abhorrence at what happened.

What was done to Ms Piang, the foreign domestic worker, was terrible, completely unacceptable. In fact, none of these words describe adequately what actually happened to her. She was tied up, burnt with heated iron, denied food, hit repeatedly, and more. She was starved and beaten to death. The bestiality of the conduct is shocking.

Chelvam has been suspended from Police duties since August 2016, three days before he was charged. He is facing five charges, including for voluntarily committing hurt against a domestic helper. Second, using criminal force. He is alleged to have hit the domestic worker's shoulders with a toy bat. He is charged with causing the disappearance of evidence – he is alleged to have removed the CCTV system from the crime scene. He is also charged for providing false information – the verbal statement he gave to the IO (Investigating Officer) about the CCTV removal is said to be false. And, abetment to VCGH (Voluntarily Causing Grievous Hurt) charge. The allegation is that he abetted his wife to illegally, basically, not give enough food to Ms Piang for no less than 35 days.

We need – and thankfully, we have – a system, where it doesn't matter who you are, whether you are a Police officer, civil servant, or man on the street, if the investigation shows that you ought to be charged,

If you go back to history, the history of people, history of countries – ordinary people are capable of extreme evil, and evil lurks in people who seem ordinary. And it doesn't occur only in faraway places and people don't walk around with clear indicators that show this person is evil. But this evil is encouraged as part of the state system when you get what happened in Nazi Germany, which was described by Hannah Arendt as the "Banality of Evil".

The point I'll make is that people who seem ordinary are capable of extraordinary evil, and there are two pillars in any society to keep evil in check. One, is education. Two, we need rule of law to keep such evil in check. The law has to come down with full force, when the rules are broken. Mdm Gaiyathiri's husband is a Police officer. We need – and thankfully, we have a system, where it doesn't matter who you are, whether you are a Police officer, civil servant, or man on the street, if the investigation shows that you ought to be charged, you will be charged, and you will face the full weight of the law.

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As I said, he has not been tried for the charges yet. These are the charges. There is always the presumption of innocence, and the matter will have to be dealt with in court. But the point is, Police officer or not, the law will take its course. After the criminal proceedings in court are over, he will face disciplinary proceedings regardless of the outcome of the trial because whatever happens in the trial, the Police have their own internal set of proceedings, and disciplinary proceedings will be commenced.

Those are the remarks that I wanted to share with you all. – **MIN K Shanmugam, 25 February 2021**

>> [Watch the video featuring remarks on the case by MIN K Shanmugam and 2MIN Josephine Teo](#)

HOME TEAM ROUND-UP

ON DUTY DURING THE LUNAR NEW YEAR



Even as we usher in the year of the Ox, our Home Team Guardians remain dedicated to keeping Singapore safe and secure! Over the Lunar New Year festive period, MIN K Shanmugam, 2MIN Josephine Teo, MOS Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim and MOS Desmond Tan visited various Home Team units to meet with officers and convey their appreciation for their commitment and hard work over the festive period.

For more photos, check out:

>> **MIN at ICA Changi Airfreight Centre:**
go.gov.sg/min-ica-airfreight

>> **2MIN at Tampines Fire Station:**
go.gov.sg/2min-scdf-tampines

>> **MOS Faishal at Pasir Panjang Scanning Station:**
go.gov.sg/mos-faishal-ppss

>> **MOS Desmond at Pasir Ris NPC:**
go.gov.sg/mos-desmond-pasirris



Links:

#1 >> <https://www.mha.gov.sg/hometeamnews/our-community/ViewArticle/guardians-of-our-home-internal-security-from-the-inside>

#2 >> <https://www.mha.gov.sg/hometeamnews/our-community/ViewArticle/guardians-of-our-home-at-work-with-a-crime-scene-specialist>

#3 >> <https://www.mha.gov.sg/hometeamnews/our-community/ViewArticle/guardians-of-our-home-busting-myths-about-being-a-home-team-psychologist>

DID YOU KNOW

SINGAPORE’S APPROACH TO TERRORISM-RELATED CASES

Following the announcement on 27 January that a 16-year-old Singaporean youth had been detained for planning attacks on two mosques, ISD shared how it has been working to rehabilitate detainees/supervisees. Here’s what you should know:

- **A holistic, intensive and long-term approach:** After the Jemaah Islamiyah arrests in the 2000s, ISD partnered with volunteers from the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) and the Inter-Agency Aftercare Group (ACG) to formulate a holistic, intensive and long-term rehabilitation approach for radicalised individuals.
- **Customised to address individual requirements:** This approach comprises religious, psychological and social rehabilitation that is customised to individual detainees/supervisees to ensure that they receive proper religious teachings that address their propensity for hatred and violence, as well as their vulnerability to radical influence. This customised approach also helps detainees/supervisees to reintegrate into society, with appropriate support to prevent recidivism.
- **Refined over the years:** As the profiles of those dealt with for terrorism-related offences has changed over the years, ISD

- **Mentoring programme:** A mentoring programme was also introduced in 2016 to meet the rehabilitation needs of these youths. This arrangement continues after their release to ensure **they stay focused and have a positive influence**. Efforts have also been made to enable these youths continue their education.
- **Reaching out to the community:** Apart from providing religious counselling to individuals dealt with under the ISA (and to their families), RRG conducts **regular community outreach efforts to strengthen Singapore’s immunity against extremist ideas**. ACG has also partnered community organisations such as Persatuan Permudi Islam Singapore, Thye Hua Kwan Moral Society and the Singapore Indian Development Association **to engage families of detainees and supervisees**

“ISD realised early on that we cannot rely on kinetic approaches alone to tackle the terrorism threat facing us, because ultimately we are engaged in a battle for hearts and minds. That is why, since the Jemaah Islamiyah arrests in the early 2000s, **the effort to combat terrorism and radicalism has been a joint effort between the Government and the**

has refined its rehabilitation approach accordingly. For example, since 2015, seven youths have been dealt with, with additional attention given to address non-ideological factors such as their sense of belonging and identity, and also to inculcate critical thinking skills to allow them to discern radical rhetoric online.

community. “Over the years, we have also constantly refined and updated our rehabilitation approach in line with international best practices, and in response to the changing profile of the terrorism detainees/supervisees.”
– ISD spokesperson, 3 February

>> Read [ISD’s press release](#) this week on an update of cases under the Internal Security Act

A BATTLE FOR HEARTS AND MINDS

FIVE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SINGAPORE'S APPROACH TO REHABILITATING PERSONS DEALT WITH UNDER THE INTERNAL SECURITY ACT FOR TERRORISM-RELATED ACTIVITIES. BY ASHLEY TUEN

go.gov.sg/isd-rehabilitation
2-MIN READ

The infographic features a QR code on the left, a central text block, and an illustration on the right showing three people in a meeting. The background is a light blue sky with white clouds.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

#LIVEFOR DRUGFREESG VIRTUAL CONCERT



The anti-drug message hit a resounding note on Monday at the #LiveFor DrugfreeSG Virtual Concert.

Jointly organised by CNB and the National Council Against Drug Abuse, the Concert is part of the annual Anti-Drug Abuse Campaign, which seeks to rally community support for the anti-drug cause.

Besides stellar performances by popular artistes Benjamin Kheng and Yung Raja, the Concert also featured the musical talents of CNB’s community partners and young anti-drug advocates, all standing up for the anti-drug cause. Other highlights of the Concert included an interview and action-packed demo by the officers of CNB’s Special Task Force.

>> [Watch the Concert on CNB FB](#)

FYI | The concert theme of “#LiveFor” exemplifies the message that when we have something to live for, we’re less likely to throw our lives away to drugs.

