

# FOREWORD



In the area of economics, “service” refers to the exchange of intangibles between a buyer and a seller. There are other definitions of “service”. In the case of the Home Team, the “service” we provide is one of necessity to the people living in Singapore – safety and security. It goes much further than transactions. It involves personal sacrifices. With this in mind, we dedicate this issue of the *Home Team Journal* to the theme of **Service in the Time of COVID-19**, to pay tribute not only to the service of our officers but also the other frontline workers and volunteers who worked alongside us to keep Singapore safe and secure.

Indeed, we were starting to plan for this issue of the *Journal* when Singapore implemented its “circuit breaker” measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic in April last year. I felt it was important to begin documenting the impact COVID-19 was having on the Home Team – on our collective mission to keep Singapore safe and secure, the organisations, the people – and how departments responded to this “crisis of a generation”. I wanted the *Journal* to provide a first-cut of history so that as time passes, we will have the on-the-job narratives and analyses that will allow us to begin to assess the strength and resilience of our organisations and crisis leadership, to draw out lessons that can feed

into future planning. This is how I envision the *Home Team Journal* growing into – a platform not just for conversations about contemporary issues, but also for documentation that can form the basis of long range, longitudinal thinking about the evolving roles of the Home Team and the conceptualisation of safety and security in Singapore.

Heeding the *Journal's* call for contributions, many Home Team officers made time to reflect on the changes their agencies have had to make. Their articles describe the urgency of staying focussed on their missions even as priorities shifted, how they leveraged technology to battle an invisible enemy even as other law enforcement threats grew and even innovated. For instance, CNB has had record drug seizures since the pandemic led to border closures except for essential supplies. In mid-April 2021, for example, CNB seized 40 kg of illicit drugs, enough to feed 12,000 abusers for a week. As guardians of law and order, we have to be as nimble and tenacious as our adversaries.

For the Home Team Academy (HTA), COVID-19 spurred us to prove that **unity is strength**. Our team of HTA-Enablers went beyond the call of duty and we were one of the first government agencies to manage three different facilities within our premises (a Government Quarantine Facility, a housing facility for relocated migrant workers from essential services, and a dormitory isolation facility), while playing our role as the Corporate University of the Home Team. We pivoted to a blended learning approach by stepping up the use of virtual modes and digital tools, which proved to be effective in meeting our course objectives.

I am also heartened to note that, as many of the articles in this issue make clear, our agencies have been determined not only to continue doing their jobs and contribute to the national efforts, but to also ensure the well-being of their officers. According to recent research cited in an article in the *Harvard Business Review*, “as we navigate various transitions over the coming months and

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years, leaders are likely to see employees struggle with anxiety, depression, burnout, trauma, and PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder].<sup>1</sup>

Home Team Chief Psychologist Majeed Khader's reflections, written at the request of the *Journal*, are thus a timely reminder of how the Home Team has been teaching its officers to cope with stress since the 1990s, and how departments have incorporated **behavioural sciences and psychological insights** into many areas of operations and resource management, including in selecting, recruiting and nurturing people. Even before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic in March 2020, the Home Team's Behavioural Sciences Centre (HTBSC) was combing through available research on the psychological effects of prolonged health crises and sharing its findings with the Home Team and its community partners. These included strategies for building community resilience during what is both a biological and social pandemic where fear is the secondary contagion, and recommendations for responding to maladaptive behaviour such as panic buying, and the spread of misinformation. Several of these HTBSC briefs have been adapted into two articles for this issue of the *Journal*. Some of their recommendations – modelling responsible behaviour, sharing accurate information, rallying people to stay calm and united while carrying on as normally as possible – are tools we can all use during challenging times.

As with previous issues, we have articles on the **Home Team's core businesses** – fighting crime, saving lives, countering terrorism, rehabilitating offenders – and the tools to do our job better, by innovating, nudging and fighting disinformation. Our partners from academia and abroad also discuss their latest research, reflecting on the lessons that history has to offer.

**The Leadership Interview**, the third in the *Journal's* ongoing series, is with Chan Tsan, Deputy Secretary (Development) and Chief Executive of the Home Team Science & Technology Agency, better known as HTX. Set up as a statutory board, this newest addition to the Home Team family is responsible for helping the entire Home Team innovate and transform for the future. DS Chan reminds us that leadership is the art of inspiring others. As he puts it:

**“When people are inspired, they give more, they give more of themselves to do their best. And how do you get them inspired? It's more effective when it comes from within, rather than being pushed, rather than being motivated by an external force.”**

Going back to the theme of service and sacrifices, giving more of themselves is what we have seen Singaporeans do all of this past year, inspired not just to save lives, but to make the “new normal” a better one.

**CLARENCE YEO**

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<sup>1</sup>Greenwood, K. and Krol, N. (2020). 8 Ways Managers Can Support Employees' Mental Health. *Harvard Business Review* August 7, 2020.