

PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY DR TONY TAN KENG YAM,
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE,
AT THE MENDAKI'S 15TH ANNIVERSARY CHARITY DINNER HELD
ON FRIDAY, 10 OCTOBER 1997 AT 8.00 PM
AT THE RAFFLES BALLROOM, WESTIN PLAZA**

Yayasan Mendaki was formed in October 1982. The impetus for forming Mendaki come from the 1980 Population Census which showed that the Malay community was performing poorly in education and socio-economic development. The Census showed that in 1980, only 14.3 per cent of Malays had secondary or higher education. The passing rates of Malay students at PSLE, 'O' and 'A' levels were also much lower than the national average.

After 15 years of work, Mendaki's success in raising the education level of Malay students are evident today. At last year's PSLE, 90 per cent of Malay pupils made it to Secondary One, a two per cent improvement over 1995. Their passing rate in English at PSLE was 98 per cent, only marginally lower than the national average of 99 per cent. The number of Malay pupils passing at least five 'O' levels in 1996 was 48 per cent, an improvement of two per cent over the previous year. At the 'A' levels, 76 per cent of the Malay cohort achieved at least 2'A' and 2 'AO' levels including GP. This is drawing close to the national rate of 85 per cent. Overall, the 1990 Census showed that 31 per cent of Malays had secondary or better education, more than double the proportion in 1980.

Similarly in the economic arena, the Malay community has made significant strides. According to the 1990 Census, the average household income of Malays has grown 150 per cent from \$896 in 1980 to \$2,246 in 1990. The proportion of Malay households earning less than \$1000 a month has dropped from 68 per cent in 1980 to 17 per cent in 1990, the steepest drop among all the ethnic groups here. Home ownership among Malays grew from 50 per cent in 1980 to 92 per cent in 1990. More Malays are living in four-room flats or better.

Progress has also been made in other economic areas. The Mendaki Growth Fund (or Amanah Saham Mendaki - ASM), started in 1991, now stands at over \$30 million. Mendaki's new Global Fund set up in September this year attracted more than \$3 m after only one month of its opening. Such positive developments indicate the community's increasing capacity to invest, resulting from rising affluence.

Today, there are nearly 400 Malay Muslim businesses in Singapore and the number is growing. The success of enterprises like Mohamed Mustafa and Samsuddin and 2nd Chance Enterprises serve as an encouragement to young Malay entrepreneurs. With young Malays working towards such aspirations, more leaders will emerge, to increase the wealth of the community and enhance the role of Malays in Singapore's economic life.

As more Malays become successful and affluent, they should not neglect to share their talents and resources with the less fortunate. The Malay community still faces many challenges, most of which can be traced back to the family and value systems. The Muslim divorce rate has climbed to 26 per 100 marriages in 1996, up from 22 in 1995. The proportion of Malays among

offenders placed on probation remains high at 22 per cent. More than a third of all cases of Beyond Parental Care seen by MCD are Malays. Malays formed 44 per cent of the drug addicts arrested in 1996.

To tackle these challenges effectively, the Malay community needs to develop long-term social programmes to strengthen the Malay family unit and inculcate good values. I am happy to note that Mr Abdullah Tarmugi is leading a Working Group to spearhead the formation of a new Family Development Unit under MUIS. The unit will better harness the community's and national resources to tackle the main family issues troubling the community. Its job will not be an easy one and will require the community's full support and commitment. The Government will support the initiative both financially and institutionally.

Mendaki has been a major player in shaping the progress of the Malay Community in the last fifteen years. Mendaki has helped the community chalk up significant progress in integrating with the rest of Singapore society. Looking further afield, we can expect the next fifteen years to bring about even more changes. Mendaki must plan ahead to anticipate the challenges and turn them into opportunities to further raise the level of the Malay community in Singapore. With sustained effort and stamina, Mendaki is well-placed to foster a new community spirit in the Malay community and be a vital part of the Singapore 21 vision. I wish Mendaki every success.
