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SPEECH BY MR CHAN SOO SEN, PARLIAMENTARY

SECRETARY (PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE &
MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT),

AT THE LAUNCHING OF TABUNG AMAL AIDILFITRI

CHARITY BOXES ON SATURDAY, 2 JAN 1999 AT 11.00 AM

AT TANJONG KATONG COMPLEX, GEYLANG ROAD

Mr Abdul Halim Kader

Chairman of Tabung Amal Aidilfitri

Presidents and representatives of
Malay/Muslim Organisations

Grassroots Leaders

Friends

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

May I first offer my special regards to our Muslim compatriots in the Holy Month of Ramadan. I am very happy to join you this morning for the launch of the Tabung Amal Aidilfitri boxes, as well as the presentation of the Tabung Amal Aidilfitri Education Grant to the children of retrenched workers.

2 Since its launching in 1992, Tabung Amal Aidilfitri has been receiving strong support from the community. Most significantly, it is not only the rich Malay Muslim who are contributing. People of all walks of life, regardless of race, language or religion, whether rich or not so well off, have been contributing.

3 They feel that there are others who are less fortunate than they are. They also know that acts of giving, whether big or small, are commendable if it is offered with sincerity and compassion. This spirit of giving to the less fortunate is a key factor towards social cohesion and harmony.

4 This spirit has been strong in our Malay Muslim community in Singapore. It is inspired by Islam, and reinforced by the traditional kampong spirit. Our Malay Muslim community set up many voluntary organisations, initiated many self-help programmes, to address to the various community issues and problems. In the traditional approach of gotong-royong, everybody give something and do something to help. Together these small amounts of something add up to significant collective contributions.

5 Tabung Amal Aidilfitri is a one of the gotong-royong projects. Although Tabung Amal Aidilfitri has general policy guidelines on target audience, you also aim to be responsive to their changing needs. You have very prudently set aside a certain percentage of the total collection from previous years for emergency and immediate disbursement. When retrenchment becomes a concern because of the economic slowdown, you decided recently to provide a \$50,000 education grant for the children of retrenched workers so that their education will not be affected. I congratulate you for your quick response which proves that you are sensitive to the needs of the people you are serving.

6 As the economic weather is not as good this year, we will have to work harder for our fund-raising effort. However, we should not be pessimistic. Singaporeans are willing to give if they feel for the cause of our charities and have confidence in our management. Reading the newspapers recently, we see plenty of reports of Singaporeans' kindness and generosity towards the less fortunate.

7 Tabung Amal Aidilfitri operates on the principle of many people, each giving a small sum adds up to a big amount. This strategy is relatively recession proof, since most Singaporeans are able and willing to give at least a few dollars to worthy charities. With more reach-out and appeal, I am confident you can reach the target of one million dollars this year.

8 So I appeal to all fellow Singaporeans to again show our community spirit, and support Tabung Amal Aidilfitri together. It feels good to do good, so let us do more good in order to feel more good. Have a Happy 1999, and to our Muslim compatriots, allow me to wish you Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri in advance.

Thank you.
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