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To:

cc: (bcc: NHB NASReg/NHB/SINGOV)

Subject: (Embargoed) Speech by Mr Lim Boon Heng, 7 Mar 99, 10.30 am.

Please note the error in the subject. It is supposed to be Mr Lim Boon Heng and not Lim Boon Yang. Sorry for the error.

----- Forwarded by MITA Duty Officer/MITA/SINGOV on 06/03/99 11:04 -----

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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, #36-00 PSA Building, 460 Alexandra Road, Singapore 119963. Tel: 3757794/5

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SPEECH BY MR LIM BOON HENG, MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NEE SOON COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S LIBRARY ON SUNDAY 7 MAR 99 AT 10.30 A.M. AT BLK

644 YISHUN ST 61

Good morning,

Mr Ong Ah Heng, MP for Nee Soon Central,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Singapore has grown tremendously over the past 40 years. As we progressed, our workers have upgraded to higher skills. A dynamic economy must constantly restructure. Today, the regional crisis has slowed down our growth. But the restructuring must go on. In fact, when the region recovers, we will be more expensive than our neighbours. Therefore we have to move even faster in the knowledge economy.

Just a few years ago, one-third of the jobs created by new investments required skilled workers, and two-thirds were for unskilled or semi-skilled workers. The situation is almost reversed, and in two to three years, two-thirds of the jobs will be for skilled workers, and only one-third for semi-skilled ones.

All workers will have to be "thinking workers". This means that workers will be constantly learning new knowledge, and thinking of how to use new knowledge to do their work better.

In other words, we cannot stop learning. We have to learn to a ripe old age! We need to develop a culture of "Learning to learn, and wanting to learn".

If our workers are to learn, then we must make information widely available. Singapore should become a world-class information hub, where information is up-to-date, and can be accessed easily. Here libraries will play a key role.

The Library 2000 Report, drawn up in 1994, recommended that we have five regional libraries, 18 community libraries and 100 neighbourhood libraries over the next 10 to 20 years.

Our children should develop the habit of learning from as young as possible. That is why Community Children's Libraries are built and located at the void decks of housing estates or in community centres. These libraries offer books in English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil. Multi-media terminals are also available, and these make learning "fun".

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The target group for Community Children's Libraries are those age ten years and below. To date, 38 Community Children's Libraries are in operation. There are almost 55,000 members. Loans have almost reached 4 million last year in all the 38 Community Children's Libraries.

Today I am very pleased to be here for the official opening of the Nee Soon Central Community Children's Library. It is made possible by the grassroots organisations under the leadership of Mr Ong Ah Heng. I know Mr Ong well. He has worked very hard to improve Nee Soon Central. The set-up of this Library is only one example. You in Nee Soon are very lucky to have a resourceful and energetic MP!

Nee Soon Central Community Children's Library has created a theme called "The Orchard". The floor area is 225 sq metres. This Library is the second Community Children's Library to have the CD Rom and Video Screening system. [Pasir Ris Elias Community Children's Library was the first.] This new system centralises the whole collection of CD Rom and video titles in one location. Users can now select the CD Rom and video titles and view them online. Furthermore, the same CD Rom and video titles can be viewed in multiple locations simultaneously. This state of the art system is another effort by the National Library Board to make its information and resources easily accessible and convenient to the public.

There are 113 English CD Rom titles, 7 Chinese CD Rom titles, 5 story-telling recordings, 68 video titles, 30 English video tapes and 8 Chinese video tapes in the library. A remarkable start up collection of 6,968 volumes of books is available for children to choose from.

By constant promotion, the National Library Board hopes to help create the lifelong learning culture. This will take us into the knowledge economy.

On this note, I declare the Nee Soon Central Community Children's Library open.

Thank you.

National Archives of Singapore