

Singapore Government

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SPEECH BY MR ZAINUL ABIDIN RASHEED

SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (FOREIGN AFFAIRS)

AND MP FOR CHENG SAN GRC

AT THE STUDENTS CARE SERVICE OPEN HOUSE

AT 1.30PM, SATURDAY, 12 JUNE 1999

AT BLK 463, HOUGANG AVE 10

Lately, there have been much said about juvenile delinquency, youth gangsterism and wayward kids. We are of course glad to hear from the Ministry of Home Affairs that the matter is very much under control. In numbers terms, we are told that there were fewer cases last year compared to the previous year. And the Police expect such problems to even decrease further this year.

2 It is indeed reassuring. But there is no denying that many parents must still be anxious about it. Indeed, it is not something we can take for granted. It is also not something that we can just leave to the Police to tackle.

3 While we have no doubt that the MHA will do its utmost to help alleviate the situation, it is worth reiterating that it has to be a task for all to look at collectively, whether the Government, the NGOs and the community at large.

4 It calls for a partnership among the MHA, the NGOs and parents to tackle such problems. Our kids are our future and that of our country. No children and youth, especially those who need help, are too small a group to be left aside to wallow in their own slippery world.

5 Help can be provided in many ways. That includes programmes to instil self-esteem and self-confidence. Some of the kids also need help in school, as non-performance or low performance often leads to low self-esteem. This could be the beginning of many related problems, including delinquency and even crime and gangsterism.

6 Thus, I am glad to be here today with you and in particular the Open House of the Students Care Service.

7 Without sounding like a word from the sponsor, and seriously, allow me to compliment the SCS for their sense of mission and service. They are indeed a social service with expertise in working with students.

8 SCS has been associated with rendering social services to students, families and schools since 1976. Her history and experience of 23 years make them a welcome presence in our community, since here is largely a community of families with young children.

9 The educational concerns of our young families match SCS' mission: 'to enable students to maximize their potential by working in partnership with schools, families and others in the community.'

10 As a Member of Parliament, I certainly hope our students and families of school-going children would benefit greatly from their collective student expertise and experience gained over the years.

11 You may ask what can we expect from this new SCS Hougang Centre? I am glad to share with you that SCS will address educational and social concerns of families with school-going children at a preventive level.

12 Students are SCS' main target group - the preschoolers, primary, secondary and pre-university students would stand to benefit from their service. Students from disadvantaged families are one of their priority areas of service.

13 SCS also develops expertise in working with special target groups, i.e.

- students with learning difficulties (those who are slow to learn),
- at-risk pre-teens and youths (e.g. The EM3 and Normal stream students),
- youths on the Guidance programme (youths who make mistakes in petty crime and are willing to change for the better).

SCS also provides teachers' training as a vital support to their work with students.

14 Today they will showcase some of the activities that they have at the Centre.

15 Prevention and early intervention are the key strategies adopted in their work with these groups.

16 I am particularly glad to announce that SCS joins hand with the Punggol East PCF Education Centre on 'READ WITH ME', a reading programme which aims to interest children in reading and acquire basic reading skills. This caters especially to the PCF Kindergarten 1 children from non-English speaking families.

17 I take this opportunity to launch this partnership project today. The PCF, together with SCS, will be working hand-in-hand with volunteers, including parents, to make a success of the project. Let this be the seed project that will bloom into many more such collaborative efforts to emphasize the spirit of partnership in tackling the educational and social problems of the school children and youths.

18 Finally, as much as I give SCS my support, I call on you to do likewise. The Centre is for you to use. Just contact the staff for your needs and contributions so that together, with SCS' presence, we can contribute to a better quality of life in this community. That, after all, is also the motto for the Grassroots Organisations here: "Punggol East 21 - A Better Life in Harmony". Indeed, together we can make a difference!

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