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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY DR OW CHIN HOCK
MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
MAYOR OF TANJONG PAGAR CDC DISTRICT
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY
OF THE WATERFALLS STUDENT CARE CENTRE
TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY, 26 MARCH 2000 AT 10.30AM
AT BLOCK 51, LENGKOK BAHRU

I am happy to join all of you today at the official opening of the Waterfalls Student Care Centre. The setting up of the Student Care Centre is most timely. The completion of HDB new blocks in Leng Kee adds to the number of dual income families who need child care arrangements when both parents go out to work. Some rely on grandparents, some rely on foreign maids, and yet others have no choice but to leave their children on their own. The Student Care Centre would provide a good alternative.

2 The family is the basic unit of society and the primary care giver for our young. However, many families in Singapore today are nuclear and dual income families. With globalisation and increased competition, these families are likely to come under increased stress. We need to support these families for them to remain effective as primary care givers.

3 For that reason, the Tanjong Pagar Community Development Council (CDC) has set up two Student Service Centres, and five Student Care Centres over the last three years to meet the needs of families in our CDC District. These community facilities enable parents to concentrate more on their jobs and ease their worries, as they can trust the centres to provide a conducive environment for their child's development when they are at work. At the same time, they need not give up quality time of family togetherness in the evenings and over the weekends.

4 The Waterfalls Student Care Centre is our latest addition. The Centre is open to children from all ethnic groups, aged 6 to 14. With subsidies, its services are also made affordable to children from lower income families. The Centre would provide an avenue for children from diverse backgrounds to come together to interact, to understand one another and to build bonds of friendship, from young.

5 The Waterfalls Student Care Centre is jointly set up by the Tanjong Pagar CDC, Singapore Tenkasi Muslim Welfare Society, and Leng Kee Grassroots Organisations. This illustrates the benefits of collaboration between community organisations. With strong community partnership, we would be able to better meet the needs of our residents and build a more cohesive and compassionate society. The CDC will continue to encourage such community partnerships.

6 Soon, the CDC will evolve to become a local administration. To start with, the CDC will take over two functions --

(1) the administration of social assistance and (2) the development of social facilities --- from the Ministry of Community Development and Sports. As the local administration, the CDC would plan the development of social facilities for our district. We will also decide on their location. Our approach of community partnership will remain unchanged. Indeed, our CDC would like to involve more residents in decision-making.

7 There are ways and means of involving residents. Forums or surveys could be held to gather their views. Our plans would also be posted on the Internet for comments and suggestions. Residents could provide inputs not only on the location of the facilities but also on the kind of value added services these facilities should provide. Starting next year, we plan to hold District meetings once the format and rules are decided. As a local administration, we want to encourage greater community partnership and residents' involvement. These would help ensure that the facilities we set up would indeed meet the residents' needs, and in the process, develop a greater sense of belonging and promote active citizenship. Together, we make a difference.

8 Finally, I would like to wish the Management Committee of the Waterfalls Student Care Centre every success in its endeavour to provide an environment which is conducive for study and care of our young.