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**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT S R NATHAN AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING
OF THE CENTRAL SINGAPORE JOINT SOCIAL SERVICE CENTRE AT
381 TOA PAYOH LORONG 1, ON SATURDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2000 AT
3.00 PM**

Associate Professor Yaacob Ibrahim
Parliamentary Secretary (Communications & IT)
& Chairman, Central Singapore Community Development Council

Mr Leong Horn Kee
Member of Parliament for Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC
& Chairman, Central Singapore Joint Social Service Centre

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to officiate at this opening of the new premises of the Central Singapore Joint Social Service Centre. It is indeed a joyous occasion, for more reasons than one.

2 A sense of understanding and bonding amongst Singaporeans from different ethnic groups is critical for the continued preservation of peace and prosperity in our multi-racial Singapore. I am gratified to learn that the five ethnic-based Self-Help Groups, namely CDAC, MENDAKI, AMP, SINDA and the Eurasian Association, had decided, some three years ago, to come together and to collaborate with the Central CDC to establish this Central Singapore Joint Social Service Centre to serve all ethnic communities. This Centre is indeed a pioneering example of how the Self-Help Groups and the CDC can work together and pool resources to not only serve the community, but more importantly, help foster closer inter-racial co-operation and bonding.

3 What we must never forget is that social and inter-racial harmony is not the natural order of societies, especially one with diverse ethnic groups – and even more so, in our case, with only a short history of common nationhood. I commend the five Self-Help Groups for their willingness to come forward to share their expertise, experience and resources to serve all Singaporeans, regardless of race, language or religion. Their sense of commitment, transcending ethnic boundaries, to the community at large, is indeed commendable.

4 Since its inauguration in December 1997, the JSSC has been organising a wide range of recreational, educational and enrichment courses accessible to Singaporeans of all races. Their activities and programmes have been targetted at all age groups, from the young to the elderly. I am pleased to learn that, while the present premises were undergoing renovation, the Management Committee was undeterred and pushed ahead to organise numerous activities at various other external locations. With such demonstration of commitment, today's official opening is not only a significant milestone for the JSSC and the community, but will hopefully mark the start of a new and exciting phase of more intense collaboration amongst the JSSC partners, to provide an even wider range of quality programmes for the community.

5 The vision for the JSSC is to become a key platform for the various Self-Help Groups to come together to foster deeper inter-cultural understanding and inter-racial bonding among all who make up our multi-racial community. My hope is that through participating in the programmes organised by the JSSC,

Singaporeans, young and old, will be able to interact and better understand their fellow Singaporeans of different racial origins and cultures. Hopefully, this will lead to them forming life-long friendships with Singaporeans of all races. That will go a long way towards fostering a deeper sense of cohesiveness and common destiny among our citizens.

6 This JSSC could be a model and test-bed for more of such co-ordinated joint efforts in the provision of services to the community in future. Such collaborative efforts are in line with our Singapore 21 vision and will further enhance community bonding and increase the sense of identification and stake in the community.

7 Lastly, I would like to exhort the JSSC management to fully utilise these new premises to expand their range and quality of services and programmes. My congratulations to all who have worked so hard to make this opening of the Central Singapore Joint Social Service Centre a reality. It is now for each and every one of you to make this JSSC a greater success by not only staying relevant to the rapid changes taking place in our social environment, but also in meeting the different and varied needs and interests of the community. I wish you every success in this endeavour.

8 It is with great pleasure that I now officially declare open the Central Singapore Joint Social Service Centre.

National Archives of Singapore
