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SPEECH BY MR OTHMAN WOK, SINGAPORE AMBASSADOR TO INDONESIA
AND MP FOR PASIR PANJANG, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE PASIR
PANJANG COMMUNITY CENTRE ON SATURDAY, MAY 31, 1980, AT 7.30 P.M.

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We have come a long way since the setting up of the Pasir Panjang Community Centre Building Fund Committee on March 14, 1975. Those of you who were involved in the fund raising process will remember what a demanding job it was to raise funds, particularly for a community centre. We were fortunate in that the construction of our community centre commenced early and consequently the cost of the building was reasonable. We would find it more difficult to realise our community centre at present day costs.

What we should appreciate most is that the building of a new community centre truly signifies the community spirit of all who are involved. There are the leaders, the fund raisers and those who actually did the footwork. In the projects organised, we had to depend on the supporters who donated cash and kind towards a common cause. Some may have given their contributions grudgingly, others may have given unstinting support. Nearly everyone in the constituency will be able to claim some credit for this community centre in one way or another. It should be a source of pride for us in the constituency to see this modern building.

Having a new community centre is one thing. Keeping it clean and well maintained and at the same time making it a hive of activities are the other things that would have to be looked into. There is no point in having a beautiful facade which is actually a white elephant. There are a few important things that the community leaders will have to work out. Amongst them would be the following:

- (i) We will have to generate more interest among the constituents in the new community centre and its activities.
- (ii) We will have to ensure that the centre reaches out to a wide cross section of the people. It should not be restricted to a select group who are the only users of the facilities.
- (iii) We should change the traditional usage of the centre to widen the scope of its activities.

There are still many people who view the activities of community centres as being meant for a small group of people. We have been trying to tear down any artificial barrier that may have arisen. The better-educated and especially the middle-income earners are increasingly aware that the community centre is meant for them too. Community organisers and leaders should not give the impression that community centres are meant as places for people to drop in casually. One way of discouraging a potential user of a community centre is for him to find out that nobody is interested in him and he is not able to fit into the activities simply because there is nobody around to help him. Community centres should increasingly think of reaching out to the public. They should not wait for clients to turn up but they should seek out and reach out to those who are in need of services. Projects organised should not merely be activities for the sake of doing them. There should be a purpose behind the activities organised.

The ultimate aim of the community centres should be to build a more cohesive and meaningful community. We need to develop people to think and feel not only of their own rights and needs but that of others and the community as well. When we have a society of unselfish people who are prepared to help their fellow human beings as well as to serve the society, then we would have achieved our aim.

This is an important and proud moment for me. As the MP for Pasir Panjang, the community centre is the realisation of a dream. Sharing this proud moment with me are those who have helped in one way or another towards this achievement. This includes those who are not present with us today but who have contributed their share in the past. To them and all of you, I dedicate this new building.

I now have great pleasure in declaring this community centre open.

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