

EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY

SPEECH BY ENCIK OTHMAN WOK, MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS, AT
THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE PERGAS STUDY CENTRE AT
JALAN DAMAI ON FRIDAY, 30 APRIL 1976, AT 5.00 PM

1 I am indeed honoured to be here this evening to officiate at the opening of the PERGAS Study Centre. The successful completion of this Centre is the result of years of planning and hard work and I must congratulate the Executive Council of PERGAS for its initiative, resourcefulness and ability to launch this \$380,000 project. The official opening of the Centre is a proud moment for all those who are connected with the project which is the culmination of years of hard work put in by many dedicated people with the support of a generous public who are willing to make a contribution towards the national effort of providing the right kind of training and teaching to our young population.

2 This Centre will be the hub of religious education and youth guidance and information. The work of the Centre will be guided by the concept that through the inculcation of relevant religious and social values, we could help young Muslims to discover and develop their identity and potential as a means of personal fulfilment and creative social participation. The Government in providing the

site on which the Centre now stands, is confident that the Centre would be put to good use for the moral training of our youths based on the principles of a good and meaningful life.

3 Our society is constantly facing a complex of new situations and intensive change. The last decade was one of the fastest moving and challenging periods in our social and economic history because industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation entail widespread social change. Such change in turn affect the institutional framework of society and the cultural and social attitudes of our people. Effeteness, self-indulgence, hippism, drug addiction and delinquency are plaguing communities all over the world. Such social evils pose a real threat to our society in that they can undermine social discipline and cause the collapse of social order.

4 There is now a growing realisation in many countries in the world that much more can be done by organisations in the field of community service and more community organisations are now catering to the needs and aspirations of the young, thus helping them to find meaningful expressions for instructive endeavours. In Singapore, I am sure there is no lack of concern for youths. The setting up of

this Centre is an indication that adults and young people alike are deeply interested in the needs of our young population and strive to plan programmes to suit their needs. It also brings into focus how much community organisations such as PERGAS can do for society.

5 The sponsors of this Centre are planning a wide range of activities such as community service, moral guidance and secular and religious education for children in primary and secondary schools. Through these activities, the Centre hopes to nurture our young Muslims into responsible and dedicated citizens, willing to use their talents and assist in the task of nation-building. Programmes will be organised to encourage the development of the idealism, imagination and energy of youths in response to community needs. Such programmes should bring forth not only understanding, responsible and astute young men and women, but also ensure the embodiment of values necessary for the consolidation of a cohesive and dedicated community.

6 Success is invariably based on meritocracy and competition is keen even in the primary schools. However, we should never forget that a good education will not only equip us for a profession, but more important, it should prepare us for a good life. Education should

not only be a pursuit in academic achievement, but it must also be a pursuit in inculcating the right sort of values so that they grow up to be well adjusted adults. This Centre has a positive role to play in guiding our young people. From our experience, we know that young people learn more quickly by following the example of their elders than through mere exhortation. Through the good example of the various teachers in this Centre, I am sure the Centre will be in the forefront in helping youths to achieve fullness of life by developing their spiritual, intellectual, physical and social well-being through healthy organised programmes.

7 It is heartening to note that even amidst your busy and hectic daily activities, all of you are contributing your valuable time, effort and money in aid of this community project. This calling to community service is a noble one and although your service may not bring you monetary or other material compensation, the real reward is much greater than money can ever give, namely, the inner satisfaction which comes from having helped to create a better community. Indeed, through this Centre, we should strive to make our society a happier place for our fellow human beings and I hope to see more people come

5

forward to play a more active social role so that their contributions can be a blessing to their fellow men.

8 Finally, let me congratulate the Executive Council of PERGAS again for its good work and I am sure it will continue doing so. I beseech Allah to make this Study Centre a blessing to all who pass through its portals in the years to come.

9 I now have great pleasure in declaring the PERGAS Study Centre open.

10 Thank you.