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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR ABDULLAH TARMUGI MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOR THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF NETBALL SINGAPORE FAMILY CENTRE, KALLANG SUNDAY, 23 JANUARY 2000, 9.00AM

Mrs Lim Hwee Hua, Member of Parliament for Marine Parade GRC and
Advisor to Netball Singapore

Mr Ng Ser Miang, Chairman, Singapore Sports Council

Mrs Ivy Singh-Lim, President, Netball Singapore

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

First, I would like to extend my heartiest congratulations to Netball Singapore on the official opening of its Family Centre. I believe this is the first facility of its kind, built by any sports association here. This new Family Centre is an important contribution to the community and a gift to netballers in Singapore. It is a concrete example of the important role that sports can play in bonding the family and community.

2 Indeed, netball in Singapore has come a long way. Our netballers have performed creditably at the Netball World Championships last year, emerging 12th out of 26 participating countries. I am told that more and more are playing the game.

3 Just last Saturday, I announced the government's intention to raise the profile of sports in Singapore. The public reaction has been very positive. Expectations are also high. I am happy to note that comments from the National Sports Associations or NSAs, indicate that they welcome initiatives that would help them become more professional and accountable. While the government can provide the policy framework and infrastructure to raise the profile of sports, NSAs have the primary role of developing our sportsmen and women as they are in direct contact with these athletes. With good management and proper guidance from NSAs and commitment from our sportsmen and women. I believe we can bring sports in Singapore to greater heights.

4 In my speech last Saturday, I stressed that besides Sports Excellence I would like to see a special emphasis on how sports can bond Singaporeans from diverse backgrounds and foster national pride. Sports can provide many opportunities for Singaporeans of different races and backgrounds to have fun together and play as one team. It can provide opportunities for our youth to excel in areas other than academic or material pursuits. It can help build character and promote teamwork. It can help cultivate a more robust and well-balanced youth.

5 The other aim would be to encourage Singaporeans to make sports a way of life. One of the Singapore Sports Council's targets is the Triple One Formula: exercise at least once a week; adopt at least one sport for life-long enjoyment; and go for a physical fitness test once a year. For those who are more enthusiastic, you may wish to consider the Prime Minister's suggestion to play two sports, one you are good at, and one or more sports, for fun. Yes, sports is fun! And if we can find the fun in sports more of us will take up sports and we can all the more enjoy keeping fit.

6 The government has invested much to build world class sports facilities all over the island. Within 3 km of most Singaporean homes is a swimming complex, a stadium and an indoor sports hall. This should mean that Singaporeans have little or no excuse not to exercise regularly. Our target is to get 50% of Singaporeans to exercise at least once a week by 2005.

7 We require a certain amount of discipline to remain committed to an exercise regimen. That is why we need to discover the fun in sports. For instance, it may seem daunting for working mothers to balance the different tensions and demands in our daily lives – the home, family, work. Often this means that exercise takes a low priority in our lives. But with greater awareness on the benefits of mental and physical well-being, this is changing. More and more now realise that we need to exercise regularly to attain the physical fitness to cope with all the demands of daily living as well as to enjoy life. I am heartened to note that there is a trend towards keeping fit. More working women are visiting the gym and other sports facilities regularly. They see it not only as a chance to keep fit and to unwind, but also to meet their friends and to socialise.

8 Netball Singapore can and should reach out to more girls and women and encourage them to play netball to keep fit. Netball is a team sport and allows many opportunities for interaction among players. It is certainly easier to stay motivated and to keep fit with the help of peer support. Support groups can also be formed through friendships made while playing netball.

9 Netball Singapore is doing an excellent job in developing the sport both at the recreational and elite levels. The management committee of Netball Singapore led by Ivy certainly deserves special commendation for having the vision to establish this Family Centre. The Centre will become a home away from home for netballers. It is also a facility for the promotion of fitness for women. I sincerely hope that this Family Centre will become a vibrant hub not only for producing great netballers for Team Singapore to win medals for the country, but also for winning over more girls and women to keep fit and healthy. It will indeed be a great pleasure for me to officially open this Centre.

Thank you.