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Subject: (Embargoed) Speech by RAdm Teo Chee Hean, 26 Feb 2000, 8.20pm

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY RADM TEO CHEE HEAN, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND 2ND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE & MP FOR PASIR RIS GRC AT THE PASIR RIS ELIAS "WELCOME 2000" GALA DINNER ON 26 FEB 2000, AT OPEN FIELD FACING BLK 607 & 606, ELIAS ROAD

Mr Charles Chong, Mr Ong Kian Min and Mr Ahmad Magad, MPs for Pasir Ris GRC. Mr Raymond Lye, PBM and Pasir Ris GRC CCC Chairmen. Mr Tan Teng Siong, PBM, Chairman, Pasir Ris Zone '14' RC, grassroots leaders and residents of Pasir Ris GRC.

2 First, I would like to wish each of you a happy and prosperous new millennium and New Year. I am very pleased to see such a large turnout of about 1500 residents tonight. My congratulations to Pasir Ris Zone '14' RC, the main Organiser of this event

3 You will have read in the newspapers that a recent survey showed that compared to other countries, most Singaporeans are proud to call Singapore

home. They are proud to be Singaporeans and proud of Singapore. We should ask ourselves why this is so, and how this has come about. Are we proud to be Singaporeans because of our economic success and material success? Is it because of our social stability and the harmonious relationships among our people? Is it because we are seen as an honest, hardworking and dependable people?

4 The answer is really all of the factors that I have mentioned, and more. The secret of Singapore's success lies in our ability to work together and achieve greater results than we could have achieved if each of us was working on our own and only in our own narrow self interest.

5 Imagine what would happen if, as in some countries, different ethnic groups or parts of the country spend most of their time and effort fighting and quarrelling with their fellow countrymen. The country will not be able to progress and the people will suffer.

6 In Singapore we have found a way of working together, where every community shares a common vision of what we want for the future, and what is for the common good. We spend our time and energy trying to find better ways of working together, and making sure that everyone contributes to the development of the country, and that everyone has a share of the benefits when we succeed. Housing is one example. Singapore has nice homes. But the pride comes not simply because there are nice homes in Singapore, but because most Singaporeans can own their own nice homes, and know that they have worked hard for them. We each have responsibility and ownership for a part of Singapore's success, and can therefore take a very personal pride in it.

7 Similarly, when Singapore enjoys peace and stability, we can all take pride in this because every family has played a part through National Service to help maintain this peace and stability.

8 In a similar way, we enjoy social stability and racial harmony because we have all put in effort to understand our fellow citizens and live and work harmoniously with them. Our grassroots leaders in the community – the members of our CCCs, CDCs, Town Councils, CCMCs and RCs have played a big role in strengthening our social stability. This is Active Citizenship that works. These members do more than just talk. In big ways and in small ways, they are around to help build the bonds at the grassroots upon which the entire strength of our society is founded. Whether it is helping to soothe a dispute

between neighbours, to help a resident who has met with some misfortune, to help new residents feel at home in the community, or to organise social occasions like this where residents can come together and get to know one another better, our grassroots organisations are making a real and important contribution to making Singapore, our home the best home.

9 I was happy to hear about the way that Pasir Ris Zone '14' RC is working closely with Siglap Secondary School to encourage active and useful citizenship through residential camping programmes with the students. By doing this, the schools and the community are playing a joint role in shaping the future of our young citizens into a civic-minded population. I therefore strongly encourage the schools and the grassroots organisations in Pasir Ris GRC to have more combined Community Involvement Programmes with each other.

10 I would also like to urge residents to get to know your community better by involving yourself in the grassroots organisations and the Northeast Community Development Council. The CDC, which is only 2 years old, is still a relatively new organisation. But it has already done a lot for the residents in Aljunied, Tampines and Pasir Ris GRCs through its various programmes and activities.

11 Singaporeans understand that through hard and determined work, we have succeeded in making our home a proud and strong country that even other countries talk about. But we must remember that to maintain this success, we must retain a strong sense of ownership and togetherness in the community we live in.

12 Finally, I would like to thank the Organising Committee chaired by Mr John Thiam and the Pasir Ris Elias Grassroots Organisations for their hard work to make this event successful and joyful.

Thank you.
