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Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by Mr Abdullah Tarmugi, 25 March 2000, 2.30 pm

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY MR ABDULLAH TARMUGI,
MINISTER OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF
“THE PARADISE” (PROJECT CABIN)
AT BISHAN PARK SECONDARY SCHOOL, SIN MING WALK
ON SATURDAY, 25 MARCH 2000 AT 2.30 PM**

Good Afternoon

Mr Leong Horn Kee, MP for Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC
Mr Koh Choon Hui (Chairman of Singapore Children's Society)
Mr Lim Kuan Min (Principal of Bishan Park Secondary School)
Ladies and Gentlemen
Teachers and Students

It is indeed my pleasure to join you this afternoon at the opening ceremony of “The Paradise”, a service under Project Cabin, jointly organised by Bishan Park Secondary School and the Singapore Children's Society.

2 I have highlighted in Parliament that we need a spirit of active citizenship in the public, private and people sectors. The Government alone

cannot address all the social issues that we face today. VWOs, like the Children's Society, can play an important role in catalysing the spirit of active citizenship among Singaporeans. You do this by being of service; by concrete actions which make a difference to the lives of our children. This reminds me of what Ruth Smeltzer once said: "You have not lived a perfect day, even though you have earned your money, unless you have done something for someone who will never be able to repay you". Good citizenship is about helping others without expecting to be repaid. Yet, I believe that active citizens find their reward in knowing that they help to make Singapore a better place to live in.

3 Project Cabin, is a reflection of what active citizenship is about. The Children's Society, in collaboration with secondary schools, addresses the needs of young students in their critical teenage years. Such a project is a welcome proposition to students who see the need for meaningful activities after lessons and outside their co-curriculum activities. The fact that this is the fifth Project Cabin to be launched in Singapore, is a clear testimony of its usefulness and success.

4 The Singapore Children's Society had conducted a survey to gather feedback on the project. It involved a total of 224 students from four schools which participated in Project Cabin. Bishan Park Secondary was one of them. Let me share with you some of the key findings:

- 74% of the students visited the Cabin because they found that it was a great place to "hang out";
- 88% of the students surveyed said that they enjoyed its indoor activities;
- 78% said that they enjoyed its outdoor activities;
- 58% indicated that they would share their problems with the Cabin staff. This is worth highlighting because other surveys had found that most students would share their problems only with their peers;
- 98% of the students found that sharing their problems with the Cabin staff

was helpful;

5 What is also heartening is that about 62 per cent of the students said that their parents had heard about the Cabin. I would like to reiterate the importance of parental guidance. There is no substitute for parental love and guidance. Teachers and the Cabin staff can serve as mentors and role models. But they should not and cannot take over parental responsibilities. Parents must continue to perform this traditional role.

6 I am delighted to note that the students enjoyed the activities organised by the Cabin. With their high energy level and zeal, this is the best time to interest and engage young people in sports. A healthy body makes for a healthy mind. And a rugged society is one that can better face and endure life's challenges. I would like to challenge the Cabin to see what more they can do to use sports as an avenue to ensure the balanced development of our youth and to continue organising activities which are meaningful, exciting and interesting to our young.

7 In closing, I would like to commend and congratulate the Singapore Children's Society and Bishan Park Secondary School for undertaking this meaningful and challenging partnership. With your commitment I am confident that Project Cabin will continue to be a success.

8 To everyone involved in Project Cabin, I would like to say "keep up the good work" and I wish you all the best.

Thank you.