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Subject: (Embargoed) Speech by Mr Abdullah Tarmugi, 31 Mar, 5 pm

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY MR ABDULLAH TARMUGI,
MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,
AT THE LAUNCH OF MCDS,
ON FRI, 31 MAR 2000, AT 5.00 PM,
AT TOA PAYOH SPORTS HALL**

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Good Afternoon

Minister Mah Bow Tan, President FAS

Fellow MPs & Advisers of CSCs

Distinguished Guests

Colleagues

As we have just seen from the presentation, the Ministry of Community Development has indeed come a long way. This afternoon, we are on the brink of yet another milestone in the history of our Ministry. From tomorrow, 1 Apr 2000, the Ministry of Community Development or MCD will be re-named the Ministry of Community Development and Sports or MCDS.

2 This name change is more than cosmetic. The transition from MCD to MCDS signals the greater policy attention we are placing on the promotion and development of sports in Singapore. It also reiterates our Ministry's commitment to strengthen the social fabric of our society. This is vital if we are to remain as one people to meet the challenges presented by the break-neck rate of change in the global economy.

3 MCDS' mission is to build a cohesive and resilient society supported by four pillars: fostering socially responsible individuals, strong and stable families, a sporting people as well as a caring and active community. To be sure, this is the responsibility of every Singaporean, but MCDS has a special role in charting directions for the future of sports and social services in Singapore.

4 We, in MCDS, are engaged in rehabilitating and re-integrating individuals and families who are on the fringe of the community back into the mainstream. Our philosophy is that every individual has the potential to contribute to society and deserves the opportunity to be the best that he or she can be. MCDS will work with our partners in the private, people and public

sectors to fulfil our mission.

5 We strongly believe that **strong families** are the ballast that anchor us and give meaning to our lives as we face the vicissitudes of our existence. The family is the place where a child receives his first lessons on the values that will guide him for the rest of his life. That is why we want to encourage better parenting, where both mothers and fathers squarely shoulder the responsibility of bringing up their children, helping them grow up into socially responsible adults. Of course, we will also have to encourage people to get married and become parents first.

6 We are also committed to promoting **active citizenship** and fostering a strong **Singapore Heartbeat**. Having a strong sense of belonging to Singapore stems from having a strong sense of ownership and taking an active role in shaping our society.

7 Through our "Many Helping Hands", approach we strive to foster effective partnerships with and enthuse individuals, voluntary, civic, grassroots organisations and corporate citizens to contribute to the community. We want to encourage more Singaporeans to volunteer, to be active players in shaping their community and in doing so, build the bonds that will strengthen the Singapore Heartbeat.

8 I now come to sport. Sports excellence will remain a key objective of MCDS. We sorely need heroes and models. Through sports excellence, we hope to nurture more sports heroes, by extending the definition of success beyond the traditional boundaries of academic and material achievements.

Sports can create more **opportunities for all** and provide another avenue for Singaporeans to achieve excellence.

9 At the same time, sports excellence helps us to build resilience, a fighting spirit, a keen sense of competition, and a can do spirit. It helps to build perseverance, grit, determination and teamwork. These are values and attributes that will serve us well as a people and that we want to instil in our young. It is not good enough to engage our youths only when they are in trouble. It is better that we engage them as they grow, channel their energies to useful ends and in the process cultivate the values that will stand them in good stead. It is partly to tap this synergy between sports and youth development, that we have placed the two portfolios together in our newly established Sports and Youth Division.

10 But to those who have no special talent in sports but who love sports anyway are not forgotten. Whether as participants, spectators or supporters we believe people establish bonds by doing fun and meaningful activities together. And few occasions can beat the exhilaration and camaraderie as we cheer together for our team.

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11 Sports is an activity that all Singaporeans can participate in and enjoy. We want sports to be a channel through which Singaporeans from all walks of life can come together, to have fun and foster a sense of community. This is exactly what we are doing today.

12 To commemorate the change in the Ministry's name, we are launching a new logo this evening. The new MCDS logo has been designed to incorporate the new focus on sports and symbolises our mission of building a

cohesive and resilient society for Singapore. The logo incorporating three figures - the individual, family and community - signifies the importance of all these elements in building a caring and cohesive society. It emphasises the importance of close partnerships between the private, public and people sectors in achieving our social goals. And the sporty, spring-like effect of the graphics reflects energy, movement, resilience and optimism about the future.

13 Even as we look to the future, we must be mindful that we are building upon the values and approaches that have brought us to where we are today. It will take wisdom, good judgement and courage to know what to change to adopt and to retain. The Many Helping Hands approach is one MCD tradition that we will take even more seriously. The spirit of service, the hallmark of our many dedicated social workers, is another tradition that we must preserve. At the same time, we must not be afraid of trying new ideas and solutions to old issues, and of looking at upstream strategies to address downstream challenges.

14 The future will be a challenging one for Singapore. The world is in the midst of rapid change as we adapt to the new global economy. Singapore society will have to be even more cohesive and resilient to withstand the pressures of this new turbulent world. MCDS will need to be innovative, proactive and unafraid to change if we are to continue to fulfill our mission.

15 On this note, I wish you a pleasant evening. It now gives me great pleasure to launch the Ministry of Community Development and Sports.

Thank you.

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