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Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by DPM Tony Tan, 16 Apr 00, 8pm

Singapore Government

MEDIA RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY DR TONY TAN KENG YAM, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, AT THE GEK POH VILLE
COMMUNITY CLUB BUILDING FUND CHARITY DINNER HELD ON
SUNDAY, 16TH APRIL 2000 AT 8.00PM AT THE MANDARIN HOTEL,
MANDARIN BALLROOM**

National Archives of Singapore

Thank you for inviting my wife and me to this Building Fund Charity
Dinner for Gek Poh Ville Community Club.

New Role of CDCs in community-based service delivery

The Community Development Councils or CDCs are increasingly becoming
an important institution in Singaporean life. The role that the CDCs play is
unique. Their main role is to plan and coordinate community services based on
local needs, with the objective of strengthening bonds in the local community.

In the middle of this year, the Marine Parade and Tanjong Pagar CDCs will take on more responsibilities for social services such as the processing and investigation of all applications for financial assistance by residents. In addition, the development and funding of community-based services such as child care centres, student care centres and family service centres will also come under the charge of these CDCs.

Involving the Local Community

Under this new arrangement, CDCs will be the key local agency in putting together an effective network of community services, based on broad guidelines drawn up by the Ministry of Community Development and Sports. But to realize the Singapore 21 vision of active citizenry, the CDCs must also seek to empower the community to help itself. By building up a strong grassroots and volunteer network, CDCs can involve more people in serving others in their local community. This will make CDCs more effective in achieving their objective of community bonding. One way that CDCs and Community Clubs or CCs can develop this neighbourly spirit is to nurture mutual help arrangements amongst residents. For example, the mutual help scheme for the elderly can be actively promoted. Our advantage is that in most cases, the infrastructure for these mutual help schemes already exists. The neighbourhood mutual help scheme can function out of our Residents' Committee (RC) Centres or CCs. A register of elderly in the neighbourhood who are living alone, or who are alone during most of the day can be maintained. Other elderly persons who are healthy and mobile can then visit these elderly in their homes, and develop their own informal network of social contacts. Such a network will benefit older Singaporeans. The healthy elderly can do something worthwhile, and the lonely elderly can be given the opportunity to interact with others.

This interaction will also allow the elderly who need extra help to be identified. Through this network, they can be assisted by the RCs or other grassroots organisations, and if need be, be referred to the relevant eldercare facilities within their community. This community network will give families the extra support they may need in the care of their elderly relatives. At the same time, residents will also be made more aware of the services that are available in their community. Residents in our HDB estates will then be able to

develop as caring communities.

Fostering Partnerships Between CDCs and VWOs

The Sembawang-Hong Kah CDC has also been very pro-active in partnering Voluntary Welfare Organisations or VWOs. For example, at the Marsiling Community Centre (CC), facilities have been provided for Ren Ci Domiciliary Services to use as an organisational base and a place where their staff can rest in between visits to the home-bound elderly. This is an example of how CDCs have taken the extra step to enable VWOs to better serve their residents. Other partnerships with VWOs that are in the pipeline include the setting up of a Family Service Centre (FSC) with Mendaki-Muhammadiyah at Bukit Panjang. Sembawang-Hong Kah CDC also has plans to develop a Students' Service Centre at Yew Tee with the Chinese Development Assistance Council (CDAC). These partnerships are what we want to see. They should be applauded. They can only help VWOs, CDCs and grassroots organisations serve our people better.

Community Clubs as a Focal Point for the Local Community

The Gek Poh Ville Community Club will serve as a focal point for services in the community as well as a place for residents to volunteer their service. It should be a place for local residents to meet, play together, serve together and learn together. CCs like Gok Poh Ville can also promote life-long learning. One of the useful programmes that CCs can organize are IT appreciation courses. The CCs can help residents bridge the digital-divide—the gap between Singaporeans who are familiar with IT and those who are not so familiar.

Gek Poh Ville CC can consider promoting IT as one of its core programmes and position itself as a community IT learning hub in this part of Singapore. Many of our retirees are more educated, but may have not had the opportunity to learn IT in their younger days. Gek Poh Ville can organise IT appreciation courses for older Singaporeans and home-makers. The ability to access information on the internet will help to promote the message of lifelong learning both for the young and old.

Conclusion

It will be up to the CDCs and the CC Management Committees to think of creative ways to make the new generation of Community Clubs relevant to Singaporeans. The Gek Poh Ville Community Club is not just a building. At the end of the day, it will be the people, the programmes, and the services that will breathe life into the Community Club and determine whether it becomes a vibrant hub for the local community. I am confident that the Sembawang-Hong Kah CDC, Gek Poh Community Club Management Committee and the VWOs will work closely together to provide quality services for residents and to engage them in helping others in their community. I wish you all the very best in your fund raising drive and urge all Singaporeans to give their support to your worthy efforts.

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