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Subject: (Embargoed) Speech by Minister Wong Kan Seng, 24 Apr 2000, 8.00pm

# *Singapore Government*

## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

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### **EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY**

**SPEECH BY MR WONG KAN SENG, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS  
AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION  
AT THE PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION AWARDS 2000 PRESENTATION  
CEREMONY ON MONDAY, 24 APRIL 2000 AT 8.00PM AT THE  
SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION  
CENTRE BALLROOM**

# National Archives of Singapore

Parliamentary Colleagues

Grassroots Leaders

Ladies and Gentlemen

This evening, a total of 113 awards will be given out to deserving grassroots committees for their outstanding efforts in strengthening our community

bonds. I congratulate the Advisers, grassroots leaders, volunteers and staff guiding, serving on or supporting these winning committees on their remarkable achievements.

2           The People's Association (PA) was established 40 years ago to promote racial harmony and social cohesion. The PA would not be able to achieve its mission without the dedicated support of the thousands of grassroots leaders – people like you – serving in the various grassroots organisations. All these years, you have put in a tremendous amount of energy and personal sacrifices to help bond Singaporeans together amidst the diverse multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural backdrop. The racial harmony and social cohesiveness that we enjoy today is in no small part the result of those efforts and sacrifices. As we celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the PA, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our past and present grassroots leaders for your valuable contributions to the Singapore we know today.

3           We are now living in a world of unprecedented rapid changes brought about by the IT wonders. The rapid advent of the internet, e-mail, e-commerce and e-business in the last decade had impacted the way we work, live and study. People can now keep track of the latest global happenings in a matter of seconds simply by the touch of a button. They can shop, work, study or acquire skills and knowledge all within the comfort and confines of their own homes. This has and will continue to bring about societal changes arising out of the changing expectations, demands and behaviour of the people.

4           In the midst of such changes, it is easy for grassroots organisations to become out of sync with the needs and demands of society. Hence, as grassroots

leaders, you must readily and continuously adapt and attune yourselves to the changing aspirations, expectations and lifestyles of the residents you serve. You must be prepared for change and to change. You cannot continue to merely plan and organise our activities as you have done year after year. Instead, you must think of new initiatives as well as creative and innovative programmes for our residents. Likewise, you must also draw in more younger volunteers into our fold. The experience and expertise of the older grassroots leaders combined with the exuberance and freshness of the young can bring grassroots work to greater heights. Otherwise, you will find that you cannot reach out to the more sophisticated and demanding residents effectively, let alone motivating them to play more active roles in contributing to our community.

5            Since 1997, the PA has introduced a star grading system for Community Centres/Clubs (CCs) and Residents' Committee (RCs). Based on their PA Awards rankings, CCs and RCs in the top 80% are given awards ranging from one star to four stars to recognise their efforts and spur them on to do better. Under the present scheme, there will always be a bottom 20% which do not earn any star. This evening, I am pleased to announce that from this year onwards, RCs which are in the bottom 20%, but have achieved the minimum standards of performance and at the same time, improved on their individual rankings will be given "ribbon awards" as an encouragement. From next year, the PA will introduce a new category of awards for CCs, the "Special Achievement Award". This award serves to recognise the efforts of the CCs in implementing outstanding community projects which significantly benefit the community. I hope this award will give the CCs the impetus to strive for greater excellence and creativity in their activities.

6            Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the

awards winners once again. For those who did not win, there is always next year. As there are many changes to the honour list, including many first time winners, I believe if you continue to strive hard, the limelight will also be yours. Have an enjoyable evening.

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