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Subject: [EMBARGOED] Speech by Dr Aline Wong, 6 May 2000, 3.00 pm

Singapore Government

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**SPEECH BY DR ALINE WONG, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR
EDUCATION, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE SINGAPORE
ASSOCIATION FOR THE DEAF (SADeaf) HEARING CARE CENTRE
AT MOUNTBATTEN ROAD ON SATURDAY, 6 MAY 2000 AT 3.00PM**

Mr Frankie Chan, President, Singapore Association for the Deaf,

Mrs Jenny Ho, Executive Director, Singapore Association for the Deaf,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am happy to be here today to open the SADeaf Hearing Care Centre. Let me congratulate the Singapore Association for the Deaf for the completion of this project. The new Hearing Care Centre reflects the Association's commitment to providing maximum opportunity for every hearing impaired

(HI) child and adult to develop his/her potential, and for the effective integration of the HI into the community at large.

2 SADeaf has come a long way since its formation in 1955. I understand that SAD currently has a membership of 496 HI persons and 5,097 registered clients. SAD has journeyed through 44 years of commitment to the welfare of the hearing impaired in Singapore. In pursuit of your mission to look after the social and educational needs of the HI and to educate parents in learning how to manage their children's hearing loss, SADeaf has provided a commendable range of programmes and services. Besides running the Singapore School for the Deaf and the Vocational School for the Handicapped, the other programmes and services include:

- Counselling and guidance,
- Financial assistance and job placement,
- Adult Outreach programme,
- Befriender Programme,
- Parent Support Group,
- Early Intervention Programme,
- Youth Development and

· The BEST/WISE Programme for academic upgrading for HI working adults.

3 In addition, you have set up the Cyberlab, where hearing impaired volunteers conduct computer training for hearing impaired persons, and upgraded the Centre for Hearing Impaired Library with a user-cum-librarian automated system.

4 The opening of the Hearing Care Centre further expands the Association's services and programmes. The Centre provides affordable or even free quality hearing care services to all registered clients, and assists in preserving their residual hearing and developing their auditory processing ability. By providing free, annual basic hearing tests and other services to your clients, as well as an Early Intervention Programme, you will certainly help to raise the quality of life of your clients.

5 I must commend the staff and volunteers for their commitment and hard work to make the Hearing Care Centre a reality. The capital cost for this service and facilities was raised through the sales of commemorative cards and TransitLink cards. It is also heartening to note that SADeaf had secured the sponsorship of the recurrent expenses for the first 2 years from the Lee Foundation.

6 I am happy to know that SADeaf, in all its projects and programmes, has been able to draw strong community support and involvement. I am told that you have a pool of 244 active volunteers and the support of various institutions of higher learning and business corporations. The volunteers provide tuition to HI pupils at primary and secondary levels, organise computer training and social, sports and recreational activities, as well as serve as interpreters and sign language instructors. The financial and professional support from educational institutions and private corporations for your projects is equally significant and heart-warming. The commitment of these active citizens, both corporate and individual, is highly commendable.

7 My ministry is happy to be associated with SADeaf in the education of the HI pupils. MOE has designated some secondary schools, where resource teachers are available to provide support to the HI pupils. There are also remedial centres where HI pupils can go for additional remedial lessons. In addition, MOE initiated a project last year to equip HI pupils with the FM equipment. It was piloted in 2 secondary schools and 29 HI pupils were provided with the hearing device. The project has entered its second phase this year, and another 41 HI pupils will be equipped with the FM equipment. If all goes well and the FM equipment proves to be effective and beneficial, MOE will continue to equip HI pupils with such kinds of hearing devices.

8 I am confident that with better facilities and services, SADeaf will continue to help improve the quality of life for the hearing impaired in Singapore and to prepare them for the demands of the new millennium.

9 It now gives me great pleasure to declare the SADeaf Hearing Care Centre open.