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Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by Mr Wong Kan Seng, 10 Jun, 7.45 pm

Singapore Government

MEDIA RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY MR WONG KAN SENG, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS
AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR BISHAN-TOA PAYOH GROUP
REPRESENTATION CONSTITUENCY AT THE THOMSON DAY ON
SATURDAY, 10 JUNE 2000 AT 7.45PM AT THE FOOTBALL FIELD IN
FRONT OF THOMSON COMMUNITY CLUB**

National Archives of Singapore

Good evening

Grassroots leaders

Residents

Ladies and gentlemen

Constituency events such as Thomson Day help to bring about greater community bonding and a closer sense of identity among residents. However, this biennially-held Thomson Day is special because it not only promotes a

stronger sense of identity but has also generated interest among other Singaporeans. For instance, in the 1994 celebrations, although the organiser failed in their bid to form the world longest human chain, they were not deterred. In 1998 the organisers successfully created the world's longest satay. This time round, Thomson Day will be the platform to find the tallest Singaporean. I commend the Thomson grassroots leaders for their creativity.

2 Singaporeans have enjoyed many years of social progress and economic prosperity. Having been spared the racial riots or civil disturbances that have plagued many countries in the world, we sometimes become complacent and take the peace and harmony we enjoy for granted. This should never be so. We should continue to consciously promote racial harmony and social cohesion through activities such as Thomson Day.

3 In our cosmopolitan Singapore, opportunities abound for us to interact with people from different nationalities and cultures, especially when we have more and more foreign talent in our midst. While these foreigners adapt to the social and working life in Singapore, we must help them integrate with the local community. By welcoming foreign talent, we are not depriving fellow Singaporeans of jobs. They are brought in because Singapore does not have enough of the needed skills and expertise if we want to sustain our economic growth. If we do not attract such people, many companies would not be investing here. The result cannot be good for Singapore in the long run.

4 Singaporeans must also never forget the lessons learnt from the 1997 economic crisis – that we need to constantly upgrade our skills and knowledge to meet the challenges of the new knowledge-based economy. I would like to

take this opportunity to urge those of you here who are afraid that your age, limited education etc will pose barriers to learning new skills to put aside these concerns. You can overcome your problems if you put your hearts and minds to it. Every step you take to upgrade your skills or knowledge is a step you are taking to stay relevant in the job market.

5 Finally, I would like to once again commend the grassroots leaders in Thomson for all their hard work and efforts in putting together this Thomson Day project for the residents. Goodnight and have an enjoyable evening.

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