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Subject: [EMBARGOED] Speech by DPM Lee Hsien Loong, 11 May 02, 8
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Singapore Government

MEDIA RELEASE

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SPEECH BY DPM LEE HSIEN LOONG AT THE ANNIVERSARY DINNER OF THE HUA YUAN ASSOCIATION, 11 MAY 2002

1. I am very happy to join you tonight to celebrate the Hua Yuan Association's 1st anniversary.
2. In the early days of Singapore's history when many Chinese from Mainland China migrated here in pursuit of a better life, clan associations played an important role. Life was difficult then. Clan associations looked after the welfare of their members, helped them to settle down in Singapore, provided social services and ran schools. Many of the new arrivals had uprooted themselves from their homes and families, and arrived penniless and alone. The associations played an important role strengthening bonds between fellow migrants from the same village or clan, offering support, companionship, and practical help.
3. Today, Singapore continues to attract foreign talent, and the number of Chinese migrants is increasing by the day, with many becoming permanent residents and eventually Singapore citizens. The physical conditions in

Singapore are no longer so tough. The economy has grown more than eight-fold since Independence, and all Singaporeans have enjoyed the fruits of growth. Standards of living have improved tremendously, and nearly every Singaporeans now owns a substantial asset. Very few are truly poor. Many of the Chinese coming to Singapore are also not penniless.

4. Neverthe-less, the Hua Yuan Association, like the clan associations, has a role to play, because it is never easy for people to uproot themselves from their homeland and settle down in a different environment. They need stable references to emotionally anchor themselves, and seek support and comfort among familiar reminders of home.

5. More importantly, they need to integrate themselves with the larger community in the country which they now call home. Groups like Hua Yuan must not cause its members to group together and hence slow down integration with the Singapore community.

6. I am happy to note that the Hua Yuan Association is alive to these considerations. Within a year, your membership has grown to over 800, a modest but encouraging start. And the Association is actively reaching out to more Chinese who have migrated to Singapore, and provide them mutual support and fellowship. Your activities range from sports events to bring members together, to providing one-stop information to members on business and work opportunities in Singapore, schooling for members' children, Singapore culture, and legal advice. The Association even has programmes catering to single Chinese who have moved here.

7. In addition, the Association has struck a good balance between strengthening the bonds between fellow migrants and helping them settle down and integrate into Singapore society. It is encouraging its members to do their part for society, through activities like fund raising events for local charities. The Association, with its Chinese speaking members, has also participated actively in our national effort to encourage Singaporeans to speak good Mandarin, organising "Fun Mandarin Camps" (kuai le hua wen ying) for students during school holidays, working with Lianhe Zaobao to organise the Fourth Mandarin Speech Contest, and bringing famous Chinese stand-up comedians (xiao xing) to perform in Singapore. More importantly, it has collaborated with other clan associations and racial groups to help its members appreciate and blend in with Singapore's unique, harmonious multi-racial society. All these are commendable initiatives, which the Association should continue to press on with.

8. Singapore has historically been a migrant society. We have drawn our strengths from the diversity of talent, experience and culture of peoples from all over the world. For Singapore to thrive, we must continue to do so, keeping our doors open to foreign talent, including those from China, and assimilating some of them into our society. The Hua Yuan Association has a part to play in these efforts. I strongly encourage the Hua Yuan Association to continue reaching out to immigrants from China, to help them settle down and become Singaporeans, and contribute to the vibrancy of the country.

9. Happy first anniversary.