

**TRANSCRIPT OF SENIOR MINISTER GOH CHOK TONG'S SPEECH AT MARINE PARADE 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS DINNER ON 18 NOVEMBER 2006 AT RAFFLES CITY CONVENTION CENTRE**

Mr Goh: "Colleagues, grassroots leaders and friends, I join Ee Chek in welcoming all of you to tonight's dinner to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Marine Parade Constituency, that is a single ward within Marine Parade GRC. I want to also first thank Chua Ee Chek, Chairman of the CCC, Robert Lim, Chairman of tonight's Dinner Organising Committee, and all those who have helped to make tonight's celebration possible. As you have heard from Ee Chek, a dinner is not just simply for us to attend, but it's also for those involved to spend a lot of time to organize it.

"I remember the first time I came to Marine Parade. Before I was fielded as a candidate, I went to Joo Chiat to understudy Yeoh Ghim Seng and, of course, before the election was called, I visited Marine Parade and I liked it immediately. I had lived for some time in Tanglin Halt, Queenstown and Marine Parade was very different from Tanglin Halt where all the blocks of flats were three-room blocks, all of the same height, no beauty within the estate. So, Marine Parade was very different. It was a bright day and I was immediately struck by the newness and, of course, also the beauty of Marine Parade.

When I was fielded as a candidate, I did not know anyone in Marine Parade. So, for my elections, I asked Chong Ah Fatt, who was the Administration Manager in Neptune Orient Lines where I was working, to be my election agent. But when the Election Day came, Nomination Day itself, when I went out to the branch, I was surprised but very delighted that so many people came forward and tonight's occasion is for me to remember these people, to thank them for having come forward at that particular time when I needed most to have a group to help me win the elections.

"First, Tan Kin Lian. I think Kin Lian is somewhere here. Kin Lian's name was given to me by someone in the party. So, actually, I went to visit Tan Kin Lian in his office in, I think, Anson Plaza. Kin Lian came to help organize and, of course, put in some other friends of his in Marine Parade to fight the election for me and Kin Lian has built up the branch and played a very important role in Marine Parade. And others who came forward at that time included Puhaindran. I did not know Puhaindran, but Puhaindran knew me because he was a teacher in Raffles Institution. I didn't pay too much attention to him. He didn't teach me, but since I was in Raffles, he came forward to help me. And there were others, old-timers like Yee Hong Phoy, who was working for a shipping agency and one of the shipping colleagues of mine in NOL asked him to come and help me. People like George Quek, an artist, also came forward to help me. And very importantly, many hawkers from Marine Parade centres came forward and I'm very glad to see many of them here tonight. I remember two names very well -- Lim Bak Hee, fishmonger, and Tan Beng Huat, who was a pork-seller and, of course, our friends over here. They have

been with us for many years. So, working in Marine Parade, not just working in the markets, but working in Marine Parade to help make Marine Parade a better place, together with me and my other colleagues for some 30 years now.

"These people formed the nucleus of the Marine Parade community. The nucleus was in the Marine Parade Branch. That's how we started Marine Parade and there are others, people like James Chay, Victor Png, Lim Beng Swee, Fletcher and many others like them, what I call the old party faithfuls. They helped me to run the meet-the-people sessions and many of the case writers worked hard throughout the years for many years in attending to the petitions of the constituents in Marine Parade and they used to go down with me to visit the residents in the housing blocks. And there was another person who played a very important part in the initial years, but later on, because of his own work he couldn't come and help us, Tan Soo Kong. Tan Soo Kong was also my interpreter. He was bilingual and I was monolingual. So, when I spoke in English, he would translate my speech into Mandarin. But beyond just interpretation, he, together with Tan Kin Lian, in the initial years, played a very important part in building up the branch.

"Puhaindran, of course, after Tan Kin Lian, was the key person in Marine Parade. He's actually my proxy as an MP. He knows Marine Parade very well. He attends to every complaint. When there's a fire, he'll be there, when there are problems, he'll be there, leaking pipes, he'll be there. So, Puhaindran, I owe you a very special thank you for your assistance all these years. And, of course, I can't just talk about Puhaindran. I must also mention his wife, who is very, very patient and very understanding in releasing Puhaindran to grassroots work in Marine Parade. So, Mary...

"During the general elections in 1976, I promised to make Marine Parade a better place to live in. I promised to have a happy community in Marine Parade and I promised to build a community centre. So, how did we get started? We first got to build the grassroots network. Marine Parade, as you know, was a new constituency. There was no grassroots organization at that point of time. So, for the CCC, I happened to bump into Lam Peck Heng one day and I knew Peck Heng from RI. When I found out he lived in Marine Parade, I said, "Peck Heng, you'll be my Marine Parade CCC Chairman". He accepted it and Peck Heng organized the CCC to help organize other grassroots organizations. So, Peck Heng, thank very much for your contribution in the early years. But Peck Heng had to retire because he was appointed to be our High Commissioner to Myanmar, then later on to New Zealand, then to India and he did very well as a diplomat and I'm glad to see Peck Heng with us here tonight. Then for the CCMC, the first Chairman is Mr Peter Lee, a remisier. He helped us for a while. When he was busy later on, Tan Kin Lian took over from him as the second Chairman of the CCMC.

"Our first task was to build the CC, which I promised that I would do before the next election in 1980 or 1981 and we set up a building fund. Many people contributed to the building fund and many residents also contributed. We decided to ask the

residents to contribute a dollar per month. For 12 months, it's \$12; for two years, \$24 and quite a few contributed actually more than a dollar. The idea was not just to go out and get funds from the generous donors, big funds, but to get the support from the people in Marine Parade. That way, Marine Parade residents would have a stake in the CC and they would come to the CC to take part in the activities. The building was completed by the time we had the next GE in 1980. But the key person in getting the CC to grow in later years was Goh Tiam Lock, but before I speak about Goh Tiam Lock, I would also like to mention that in the initial years, our CC was very active innovating new activities and one of our new activities was computer classes. Again, Tan Kin Lian and Tan Soo Kong and later on, Yap Eng Lee, these were the computer-literate people. They started the new computer classes in Marine Parade. On looking back, I wish I had at that time attended the classes. I started learning computer a bit late. I should have actually gone to those classes and be a few steps ahead of the others. So, Tiam Lock played a very big part in rebuilding Marine Parade, not once, I think not twice but three times and today's big Marine Parade CC is due largely to the energy, to the vision, to the drive, to the close attention of Goh Tiam Lock. So, Tiam Lock, I want to recognize you for your very big contribution to the Marine Parade CC.

"Well, then, when we talk about Marine Parade CC, we must remember the staff. The staff have also grown with Marine Parade. They have also grown, shall we say, old with me and, in fact, Jennifer has retired. I'm still working while she has retired. Jennifer, together with other staff of Marine Parade, I thank you for your years of very dedicated service to Marine Parade, to the People's Association, to the people in Marine Parade whom you served.

"Then the RCs. You know, the origin of the RCs, you might not know, but actually, there was a taskforce set up by the People's Action Party to decide how to organize the new estates because the new estates were not yet a community, the people were not yet a community and there were also the occasional thefts, housebreaking and so on. So, the taskforce suggested that we should use police officers to form the core of a committee in each block. The idea of the police officers was this -- they were given preference in buying a flat. So, of course, they had a choice of the flats and as a result of that, the taskforce thought they should also be helping the residents in a new estate like Marine Parade and if they police officers could form the core within each block, then you could have a block committee who amongst other things can ensure the safety and security of each block. But I was alarmed by the idea of block committees initiated by the police because it meant that all the key office-holders, the initiators of the block committee, will be police officers. I was fearful that it would end up with the misperception that all the blocks, the whole estate will be controlled by police officers which, of course, was not the idea. They were residents there. So, I wanted to avoid the image of police being in control of our lives in the new housing estate. So, I suggested that we should actually form Resident Committees, breaking down an estate into several precincts and these precincts would have an RC.

"The question was how do you identify the leaders in a new estate like Marine Parade? So, together with Tan Kin Lian again, we decided we should do a survey of the residents on what they would expect of a new estate like Marine Parade, the comments on facilities and amenities, what they want us to do better for Marine Parade. And, of course, some of the questions were open-ended. Based on their replies, we would know who were the residents who were more interested than others in looking after Marine Parade because they took the trouble to give us detailed comments. People's Association helped us in designing the form and in analyzing the forms and through that survey, we were able to induct many of the original RC leaders for Marine Parade. So, people like Naidu, whom we call 'the bird man' because he could imitate the songs of birds very well. He actually won a talentime by imitating birds. Well, alas, he has passed away. Terence Kein, also an original, also he has passed away and others like them, I want to thank them for their contribution in getting our RC started in Marine Parade.

"To reach out the Malay community, I enlisted the help of Basiron Jumaat and Captain Hamid Khan. Basiron worked in the then Singapore Broadcasting Corporation or today's MediaCorp and Hamid Khan worked in the SAF, a very reliable, very trustworthy, very honest SAF officer, very hardworking, too. Again, unfortunately, both would not able to join us tonight because both have passed away some years ago. But they were very important in helping me and the grassroots leaders in reaching out to the Malays in Marine Parade. Their role has been taken over by Abu Ibrahim and Abu Ibrahim has been helping us for many years now and for his dedicated service, he was awarded PBM a year or so ago.

"And to build the community, you got to reach out to the residents. How did we do it beyond asking grassroots leaders to knock on doors and collect old newspapers? We started a Marine Parade newsletter called Marine Parade News. First Editor -- it was a monthly newsletter -- first Editor, Teo Eng Tat, who was a sports journalist for the Straits Times. Again, as you would know, this is the 30th anniversary of Marine Parade. Teo Eng Tuck has also left us, he too has passed away. Then later on, T S Khoo, also a former Editor from the Straits Times, came forward to help us run Marine Parade News and to improve on the quality and on the format, on the design of Marine Parade News.

"Then we thought we should have a song for Marine Parade because it's a song which could be sung by all Marine Parade residents that would serve as a common theme for us and we were fortunate to have a very musical family to help us do the lyrics as well as the music for the song, the Ferdinands. So, Mrs Ferdinand... They'll be around here somewhere because they'll be up here later on to perform the new Marine Parade Song. Mrs Ferdinand is also very active as an RC member.

"Then we have the Marine Parade Kindergarten which is necessary because at that time it was a new constituency and the demand for kindergarten classes was very high. We started one and the first person to run it was Christine Chew. Then, after some years, she moved out of Marine Parade and she also left the job. Then Mrs

Chin took over and she has been with us for many years now, over 20 years. Mrs Chin, is she here somewhere? Yeah. Now, I have seen the quality of the kindergarten classes and the students improved in Marine Parade and that is due mainly to Mrs Chin and the teachers of our kindergarten who put in a lot of work in attending to the needs of the students. Some 30 years, I think the kindergarten classes in Marine Parade started about 28, 29 years ago. So, one whole generation of people have actually gone through the kindergarten in our Marine Parade. But again, Puhaindran, not just Branch Secretary, CCC Chairman, but he was actually the behind-the-scenes principal of our Marine Parade Kindergarten. He helped, he teaches in the syllabus, in teaching methods and so on. So, Puhaindran, as you could see, I think, was everywhere and Puhaindran, thank you for helping us in with the kindergarten. Fletcher is helping us now and Goh Mong Hak looked after the finances for the kindergarten.

"Well, talking about finances, I now come to the patrons. They were the ones who helped us when we needed help financially. John Yam Chong Tuck, I knew him in the university. So, when I became an MP, he volunteered to help. He said, "How could I help you?" I said, "Very easy, just give us some money". So, I appointed John Yam as patron and he has been our patron ever since. Recently, he had a mild stroke. He has recovered very well, but still a little, less mobile than before. Is John here? No? Because of the stroke, he couldn't quite move so easily. Then Danny Ng -- I knew Danny Ng when he was the printer for Neptune Orient Lines. He was printing our bills of lading and other documents, diaries and so on. So, Danny also offered to help me and he contributed generously in building the CC and in funds whenever we needed. He also printed Marine Parade News for us for free all the time. So, Danny, thank you.

"Sin Leong -- you know, we go to his restaurant. He charged us good food but cheap. That's what I was told. But Sin Leong also very generous in contributing to the building fund, in activities of the CCC and other grassroots organisations which he supported. Sin Leong and of course, Hock Lye was a bit later, but Hock Lye is as generous as one can be. Hock Lye. Hock Lye is not just a patron for Marine Parade CCC. I discovered later on that he was also a patron in Chua Chu Kang and then somewhere else too. So, he has been kept by many people, by at least three constituencies. He is a developer, small-scale developer, very enterprising. When the market went down in Singapore, he went to Australia and New Zealand. I mean, that is how one survives. They don't just stay in Singapore and say, "Oh, no, no business and so on". He went to Australia and New Zealand. He says, can do, can survive, but still very generous.

"Then, two other persons who've helped us to raise funds besides contributing their own to Marine Parade. First, I will mention Charlie Phua. Charlie Phua worked in Intraco. I knew him when he was working there. So, he offered to help us. So, one day, I read in the papers he helped to raise half-a-million dollars for Tanjong Pagar. So, I said, "Charlie, if you raise half-a-million for Senior Minister, you've got to also raise the same amount for me". This was for the new CC which we had. By then, I

become Prime Minister. So, I said, "You must raise at least \$500,000", which I think he worked very hard. I don't know how much he raised, but he did raise -- \$5 million? Sorry, \$5 million, he raised, Charlie. But unfortunately, Charlie Phua would not be able to hear our applause. He, too, had passed away.

"Well, Arthur Lim, generous with his time, with his money. Arthur Lim, as you know, is a very eminent eye surgeon and he is now in the US to receive an award, according to Ee Chek and Arthur Lim, too, I would like to thank him. And the others who have also contributed in a big way, people like Primus, who is here today, and Tony Tan. These are the people who we still have our hands in their pockets. There are many more people I should thank and if I have left out any names, I apologize because I am just recalling from memory as I typed out my remarks. So, I thank all of them for helping me to make Marine Parade a better place for all of us to live in.

"So, 30 years is a long time. In fact, 30 years is nearly half of my life. So, also for the grassroots leaders, we have spent nearly half of our lives in the service of Marine Parade. One whole generation has grown up and we, the grassroots leaders, have also seen our children grow up and now, many of us happily also have our own grandchildren to look after. In those 30 years, the profile of Marine Parade has changed. First is the physical profile. As Ee Chek mentioned just now, Marine Parade today is actually more beautiful, newer-looking, better-looking, even younger-looking than the Marine Parade of 30 years ago. That's because we have spent a lot of money in upgrading the whole estate.

"But more important than the physical transformation, we've got to pay attention to the two subjects mentioned by Ee Chek. One is the ageing of the population in Marine Parade. If you look around you, the retired grassroots leaders, the present grassroots leaders, many of us are on the older side of 50, some 60, some even 70. And one in six in Marine Parade is over 65 compared to the national average of one in 12. So, if we project forward for another five years, ten years, we are going to be around because we stay healthy and we intend to be around, so we can see the ageing of the population in Marine Parade. So, I have been discussing with Ee Chek on what we should do in putting in place a total system to look after the ageing population in Marine Parade. I have had preliminary discussions with Lim Boon Heng who has been tasked by the Prime Minister to look at this problem of ageing population, also with Khaw Boon Wan, the Health Minister, and Matthias Yao, the Mayor of the Southeast CDC. Later on, I would discuss with other ministers.

"Basically, the idea is to have a national policy, the measures of programmes for the whole country, but to deliver this on a constituency basis. So, I told them that I would volunteer Marine Parade to be the constituency which they can have a pilot project whatever programmes they may have. Now, when you talk about the elderly, it's not just the sick or the poor elderly. It's all those who are, say, beyond 65 or maybe we redefine to be beyond 70. Most of them will be active, financially well-off,

but some, they may be well-off, but they are inactive because they haven't got their children to bring them out. They do not have the network. So, we've got to have a social infrastructure beyond the physical infrastructure of lift stopping at every floor, elder-friendly environment, but the social infrastructure is very important, aiming at the active, those who are not so active, the poor, those who are sick and so on. So, we will be working out such ideas to see how those ideas can be delivered at the constituency level. So, this is where the CDCs come in and Mayors come in and the advisers come in.

"And the second issue, which is a simple one, is how to reach out to the new residents in Marine Parade. Every month, I sign letters to welcome new residents and the PRs and on average, I would sign about 30 letters every month and quite a few of these people are actually PRs buying into flats in Marine Parade. So, can you imagine I have been signing these 30 letters every month for the last ten years or so. So, there is a turnover of population in Marine Parade. We've got to make an effort to reach out to them, draw them out to join us in our activities and, better still, to get them to serve Marine Parade because they will be future citizens and they will be the future residents who'll have to look after Marine Parade.

"The leadership renewal in Marine Parade has started with a branch. Puhaindran has stepped down and Kok Pak Chow has taken over, but Koh Buck Chye has some personal commitments and he thought he should, for the time being, step aside and I have appointed James Ong as my Branch Secretary. He will be assisted by Yusoff Lateef as Vice-Chairman. And then Tan Jack Thian, the GM of our Town Council, left us to become the COO, Chief Operating Officer in KK, that is the Kandang Kerbau Hospital. Well, we lost him, but I thought, why lose him. I said, "Jack, please come in and be a member of my Marine Parade PAP Branch". So, he is now a member of the PAP and he is going to play an important part in our PAP branch. Puhaindran will remain in the branch as adviser and he will still be very active, but he knows and I know that we've got to groom up these younger people to play a role. We do have a team of younger members now in the Marine Parade Branch.

"Othman Eusoffe, he was my classmate in RI. I put up his name to the PAP for consideration as a candidate because at that time, PM Lee Kuan Yew was asking me, "Can you find Malay candidates? Who are your friends?" So, I looked around, I said, "Ah, Malay candidate, why not you know put up Othman Eusoffe's name?" I put him up, he was selected. He worked not just for Lee Kuan Yew, but he worked for me in Marine Parade. When I became Prime Minister, I did not conduct MPS because I was fearful that the whole of Singapore would descend on Marine Parade Branch, thinking that the PM could do many things for them and also I did not want to destroy the myth that the PM has no power because when they come to see me as PM, they say, "Can I please get a HDB flat in a hurry? I need it next week". I will write the letter to the Clerk of HDB and the Clerk of HDB would reply to say, "Sorry, it can't be done". Then suddenly, they realize PM has got no power. So, I said, "No, no, I would not want to do it. PM has got power, but you use power at the right time,

at the right place, on the right issue". So, Othman Eusoffe has been very helpful in looking after Geylang Serai, in helping me in Marine Parade.

"Then for CCC, Chua Ee Chek has taken over from Puhaindran. So, there is self-renewal there. CCMC, Loh Soo Ann has taken over from Goh Tiam Lock. But Loh Soo Ann is actually younger than Goh Tiam Lock in heart, he's older in age. I thought he was younger, but I found out that he was older than Goh Tiam Lock. I said, "Never mind, you're younger in spirit than Goh Tiam Lock". So, Soo Ann has taken over from Tiam Lock and Tiam Lock was very busy with his work at that point of time. So, Soo Ann took over, but it's a very tough act to follow. But fortunately, for Soo Ann, there are some more CCs to be built. And RCs, too, you could see that the leaders are being renewed. Chairmen, secretaries, slowly, we are getting younger people to come forward to take over from the older RC members.

"And finally, when will the MP of Marine Parade be renewed? Well, I can tell you, it will not be before the next GE in 2011. I am still required by the Party to help out, to assess the newer MPs, to look for candidates, to interview candidates and to groom a younger team of leaders to take over from the older ones and in government, the PM still would like me to play a role, not just as Chairman of MAS, but also to make use of my contacts, international contacts to stay with those people whom I know and also to move into new areas like the Middle East. So, in government, I can still play a role there. So, I would continue to do so until after the next GE, which I will be contesting. And the reason is simple. I have to contest because in Marine Parade GRC now, we have four first-term MPs -- Fatimah, Faishal, Seah Kian Peng, Lim Biow Chuan. Ong Seh Hong is new to Marine Parade GRC, but at least, he's a second-term MP. So, we cannot assume that without me the five of them could win the kind of votes which I could win. They will win, but it's the kind of votes which we want to win which is important. So, I don't see myself stepping down, I got to fight the next GE to help us secure as higher votes as possible. After that, well, we take one step at a time because it's not for us to plan. So many things can happen, so many of my colleagues, friends have disappeared against their will. So, you can't say. One step at a time.

"But thank you very much for coming to join us tonight in celebrating our 30th anniversary, but most importantly, I thank you for all your contributions in Marine Parade. Let me also thank our fellow colleagues and grassroots leaders from Marine Parade GRC. I did not thank you because Marine Parade GRC is not 30 years old. Tonight is for the Marine Parade occasion, but thank you for coming in joining us in celebrating our 30th anniversary. Thank you."

=====