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Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by Mr Abdullah Tarmugi, 8 March 2000, 7.50 pm

# *Singapore Government*

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**SPEECH BY MR ABDULLAH TARMUGI  
MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
AT THE BUKIT HO SWEE SOCIAL SERVICE CENTRE'S  
FUND-RAISING DINNER  
WEDNESDAY 8 MAR 2000 AT 7.50PM,  
MANDARIN HOTEL SINGAPORE  
MANDARIN BALLROOM, 6th STOREY**

Good evening  
Mr Gerard Ee

Centre Manager, Bukit Ho Swee Social Service Centre  
Mr William Choo  
Chairman, Fund-Raising Committee

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

My wife and I very pleased to join you this evening at this fund-raising dinner organised in aid of the Bukit Ho Swee Social Service Centre Building Fund. The funds raised will go towards the re-location of the Bukit Ho Swee Social Service Centre, and the conversion of the existing premise into a youth centre which will concentrate in helping young people who have gone astray.

2 The Bukit Ho Swee SSC was formed thirty years ago, in 1969, with the pragmatic aim of helping Bukit Ho Swee residents solve problems associated with poverty and crowded living conditions.

3 The Centre has come a long way since then, just as Bukit Ho Swee itself has changed. Today, it provides a wide array of programmes. There is the Bukit Ho Swee Family Service Centre which provides services for families, children and the elderly; the Hangout, a youth service specialising in helping young offenders get back into main stream society; and the Family Learning Centre, a facility which provides counselling to poor families with multiple problems.

4 The Bukit Ho Swee SSC has also initiated and participated in many innovative programmes. These include the use of circus arts to reach youths at risk, the Elderly Outreach programme which provides support and care to lonely senior citizens, the "Men-in-Recovery" programme which helps perpetrators stop the use of violence and the Streetwise Programme which rehabilitates teenage gang members. Its latest initiative, the Toughlove Parent Support Group Programme helps parents develop delinquency management skills to help them practice fair and assertive parenting.

5 The Centre has also been proactive in its approach. For instance, it networks with grassroots organisations to study the needs of the elderly so as to improve its services and programmes for this group.

6 The Bukit Ho Swee SSC's efforts in responding to the social and welfare needs of low-income families and youths at-risk are indeed commendable. Your work reinforces the important role VWOs play in our "Many Helping Hands" approach to providing social services. As a voluntary

agency in the frontline, your work will have direct impact on the public we serve. And being at the ground, you are in the best position to quickly detect, help and monitor high-risk families in the community.

7 It is important that we have in place a comprehensive social support network for those in need of our assistance. Families today face all kinds of challenges and pressures. Changing lifestyles, values and behaviour have led to fewer extended families, a shrinking family size and an increase in dual-income families. All these have implications on family life, parenting, spousal relationships and development of our children.

8 To ensure that the family remains strong and healthy in the face of these challenges, MCD works closely with welfare organisations and the community to provide a wide range of social support services to families. This approach not only ensures that help is available to those who need them, but also facilitates the development of a more caring and cohesive community.

9 In his letter of invitation to me, Gerard Ee wrote: "Not being adept at fund-raising, we depend on the goodwill extended by corporations and individuals sympathetic to our causes. In this context, I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Mandarin Hotel Singapore for offering a special discount banquet package price, its assistance in organising as well as selling the tickets for this event and Mr William Choo, General Manger of Borneo Motors who despite his busy schedule, agreed to sit as the fund-raising chairman. Also the effort and time the staff of both Mandarin Hotel and Borneo Motors put into making this fund-raising dinner a success is indeed commendable and deserve recognition. The support of private organisations like yours enhances the community's ability to provide assistance to its members who need help. I hope more organisations and corporations follow their example.

10 I congratulate Bukit Ho Swee Social Service Centre for the fine work it has done. It deserves all our support and encouragement. I hope that the expansion of your centre will be a successful one, and that even more people will benefit from your programmes. I wish you every success in your future endeavors.

11 I wish all of you a very pleasant evening.

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