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SPEECH BY THE SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (SOCIAL AFFAIRS) AND ADVISER TO THE SINGAPORE ACTION GROUP OF ELDERS (SAGE) MR. CHAN CHEE SENG, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE CULTURAL CENTRE CUM ELDERS' ACTIVITIES CENTRE FIRST ANNIVERSARY AT APARTMENT BLOCK 2, SECOND FLOOR, KITCHENER ROAD, ON MONDAY, JAN. 1, 1979, AT 10 A.M.

I am pleased to be here for the official opening of the Cultural Centre of the Singapore Action Group of Elders.

The first Activity Centre established by SAGE was opened exactly a year ago to provide essential activities and facilities for the benefit of elder citizens who are members of SAGE. The Activity Centre is now well established and effectively organised. Much of the success of the centre can be attributed to the able leadership of the president of SAGE, Dr. Lim Chan Yong, and to his dedicated corps of executive committee and members who have volunteered their services to organise the centre's various functions. I am especially happy to note, among these activities, the part played by the youths and adults because they symbolise to some extent the success of our efforts to bridge the age-gap between them and the older folks who take part in the centre's activities.

Since the opening of the Activity Centre, the membership of SAGE has grown from about 500 members to nearly a thousand today. The number of members who wish to participate in meaningful activities that will give a sense of purpose to their old age has become high enough to warrant the acquisition of more space and the drawing up of an expanded programme of new activities.

In view of this, the second centre that is being opened today will pay attention to cultural activities. I have observed that among the members of SAGE, there exists a pool of latent cultural talent. Many of the members are experts in certain fields of cultural pursuits. Because of the lack of opportunity in the past, their talents have tended to remain hidden. I believe that

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if their talents and artistic gifts are given the chance to come to the fore, these elder citizens would be able to experience a spiritual and cultural upliftment and fulfilment. It would also mean that they would be able to pass on some of their skills and craft to the younger members who would be participating with them in the various cultural pursuits that are being planned.

This is why the second centre of SAGE is being planned primarily as a cultural centre. It is the intention, for example, to get the members to organise wayangs in the various Chinese dialects, as well as exhibitions in other performing arts such as the Malay Bangsawans and Indian classical dances.

SAGE would welcome the participation of more people, including non-members and the younger generation in such activities. I believe that the participation of younger people is essential, not only to bridge the gap between young and old, but also because the young, by combining their rich resources of energy and imagination with the talents and experience of the old, will contribute significantly to the success of the cultural activities of this centre.

The opening of this centre is a sign of the demand for meaningful and enjoyable recreational activities for our aged citizens. Just like other people, elder citizens are in need of opportunities whereby they can make their lives richer and fuller. The potential exists for further development of more activity centres and, provided there is energy and there are financial resources matching the potential, I am sure that many more such centres will be established in the years to come.

I would therefore like to thank all well-wishers for their generous donations to SAGE to make this development possible. SAGE does not run income-generating activities and must depend on the generosity of donors to make its activities for elders possible. Therefore, all donations will be welcome. With more money, and also equally important, with more direct voluntary services from members of the public, SAGE will be able to extend its horizons further and bring more light, more cheer and more meaning to those who are growing old.

It is now my pleasure to declare this Cultural Centre open.
