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PRESS RELEASE

05-1/80/02/22

SPEECH BY MR HOWE YOON CHONG, MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MP
FOR POTONG PASIR, AT THE POTONG PASIR LUNAR NEW YEAR
CELEBRATION DINNER ON 22 FEBRUARY 1980 AT SENNETT
COMMUNITY CENTRE AT 7.30 PM

The year 1980 is the beginning of a new decade. Already the signs are that we are going into rough weather politically and economically. We must, therefore, be more resolute and be better prepared to face the difficulties ahead. With the full support of the people and with our leadership that has been tested in many earlier crises I am in no doubt that Singapore will pull through. It will mean more hard work for all of us but we should be grateful that we work with some purpose in mind and with the firm conviction that our efforts will be rewarded. With economic well-being there will come a greater need to secure what our efforts have been able to achieve for us. We will have to defend ourselves, our families, and our country. Otherwise all that we have achieved will be reduced to nothing. In the light of the political uncertainties that we can see ahead, particularly the upheavals that are taking place in the South-east Asian region in which we live, defence and security take on much greater urgency. The people of Singapore should realize that national service is an absolute necessity and those who are required to do national service should take it seriously and try to make the best of the training that is provided for them at great costs. It may be salutary for everyone, if I were to tell you that you should feel much better with a gun in your hand, well-trained and capable of using it rather than to stand empty-handed with a gun pointed at your belly.

Tonight's dinner is to celebrate the Lunar New Year. We have just completed a successful year and can look forward with confidence to meet the challenges ahead. I must thank all those who have worked hard over the last 12 months to help improve living conditions in the Potong Pasir Constituency and to assist the many people who had different problems and difficulties. I share with you the satisfaction of helping our many constituents to solve

their various problems. Perhaps it is useful for me to report the major developments in our Potong Pasir Constituency.

We begin with the HDB housing estate in the Lorong 8 area. Here the People's Association has requested HDB to construct a temporary sub-community centre to replace the one in the Potong Pasir Village. The open space adjoining this new sub-community centre will be developed by HDB into a public park and recreational area. This added amenity together with the kindergarten and the many classrooms to be used for different lessons and courses will provide the residents of Lorong 8 with more opportunities to get together. The Residents' Committees formed for Zone A and Zone B in Lorong 8 have worked hard, and should succeed in integrating the residents into a socially conscious, responsible, and closely-knit community.

Next we look at Sennett Estate. The people of Sennett Estate have made various requests, particularly with regard to security and safety, on the roads, car parking, sprucing up of roadside trees, flood damage, environmental, mosquito, and other problems. These have been promptly attended to by the relevant authorities. The Sennett Estate Residents' Association has a very hardworking Committee striving vigorously to improve environmental and living conditions as well as to generate greater interest and participation of residents in community work. Because of their work more and more of the Sennett Estate residents are becoming aware of our political and social problems. Many are beginning to take pride in their community. We very much hope that more of the Sennett Estate residents who have up till now led a very secluded life will come forth to contribute towards closer understanding, friendship, and mutual cooperation between them and the other residents within the Potong Pasir Constituency.

Those who devote their time to community work will obtain much satisfaction in helping their fellowmen with their problems and difficulties. The more fortunate in the society should not be withdrawn into their limited circle of activities but should rather find satisfaction and feel proud to render social service and to assist the less fortunate with their problems and difficulties. The better-off residents of Sennett Estate, Lorong 8, and other areas should feel no uneasiness in coming forward to join in the activities of the community centres and contribute towards improving the general welfare of the residents and the living conditions in the Constituency.

The main upheaval over the last 12 months has been taking place in the Potong Pasir area. Many families in Upper Serangoon Road, Jalan Potong

Pasir, Lorong Ahadiat, and Moyappa Chettiar Road have been resettled in the HDB estates, mostly in Ang Mo Kio. The majority are happy in their new homes. Some have difficulty finding employment, others need assistance to obtain hawker stalls, or to find places in nearby schools for their children, etc. A number of them have not yet been paid their compensation by the Resettlement Department because the landowners have claimed ownership of the buildings and the HDB has not decided to whom the compensation should properly be paid. Hopefully these problems will be settled soon.

According to the HDB, construction work to redevelop the Potong Pasir area into a new housing estate in three stages will begin later this year. The first stage when completed by early 1982 will yield 500 flats. The second stage will start in 1981. By the end of 1982 there should be some 2,000 families accommodated in Potong Pasir. The third stage will see the completion of the whole development by 1984, when with 4,200 families who make their homes in this housing estate, the whole Potong Pasir area will be quite different from what it had been before. The old will then have given way to the new.

The new Potong Pasir housing estate will need a new community centre. By 1984 this centre will probably be the key centre for the Constituency. Work must now begin to raise funds for this new community centre. The HDB has agreed to plan for this new community centre together with the first stage of the housing development. The design and layout of the new community centre will blend into the housing development. Our Fund Raising Committee will have to be set up soon and we will need to work with the HDB to make sure that the new community centre incorporates the facilities that our constituents will need. It is not anticipated that there will be much difficulty especially when we are assured of so much goodwill and assistance from the officers of the HDB.

Two other areas have also been subject to the kind of changes that have been taking place in different parts of Singapore for the last 20 years. The Jurong Town Corporation has acquired much of the Kolan Ayer area for the development of a new industrial estate with flatted factories to accommodate clean and high-technology industries. This will provide more job opportunities for the people in and around the Potong Pasir Constituency. Those residents who are affected by resettlement will be given every assistance to find new homes.

Kampong Woodleigh has recently been subject to government re-settlement action aimed at sprucing up the whole area around Braddell Road and Upper Serangoon Road. The residents affected can be given more time, but they have been advised that the longer they delay, the higher will be the prices of HDB flats. They need to consider carefully whether to delay and remain in their present accommodation or to decide to accept resettlement. Every assistance will be rendered to enable them to move from Kampong Woodleigh to the new housing estates.

We can say that the Potong Pasir Constituency enters the era of the 1980s with much promise of improvements all round. It is true that many of our old friends will be moving away to new housing estates and it will be some time before new residents move into the Potong Pasir area. But we are happy to see the old make way for the new and in the process we have minimised the hardship and inconvenience that normally come with such change. All this has been made possible through the efforts of community leaders and the cooperation of the officers of the HDB and other Government departments. To all these hardworking people who have helped us, I must express my sincere appreciation and gratitude.

It is now my pleasure to present Certificates of appointment to the newly appointed members of the Management Committees of the Sennett Community Centre and the Potong Pasir Community Centre. It is natural that we should see the infusion of new blood into our Management Committees at regular intervals. Like leadership in other fields, there must be a continuous inflow of fresh talent and new ideas. This does not mean that the present community leaders have not been doing excellent work. They have done well indeed but we should not rely all the time on the efforts of the same group of hardworking people. They can be the elders who will guide and advise the new leaders who have volunteered their services. Many of these new leaders live within the Constituency. They have, therefore, the advantage of knowing the problems in the Constituency. They can quickly learn to take over more and more responsibilities. Let us hope that these new leaders will keep up the excellent record and in the process many more socially conscious people will be attracted to come forward to offer their services to help the less fortunate in our community.

In closing I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you Good Health, Good Luck, and Prosperity in the Year of the Monkey.