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ADDRESS BY MR HOWE YOON CHONG, MINISTER FOR HEALTH,
AT THE NEW POTONG PASIR COMMUNITY CENTRE FOUNDATION STONE LAYING
CEREMONY ON SUNDAY, 15 AUGUST 1982 AT 10.00 AM

This new Community Centre whose foundation stone we are officially laying at today's ceremony was included in the original development plans of the HDB Potong Pasir Housing Estate which was to be built under seven contracts. The first five contracts will yield 2604 flats while Contracts six and seven will produce another 1030 units. When finally completed they will add 3634 families (or more than 10,000 people) to the population to the Potong Pasir Constituency.

The site for the Community Centre had already been reserved as part of the development plans. The People's Association's approval for building this new Community Centre which would become eventually the key centre for the Constituency was given in late 1979. It was agreed that the HDB should design the Community Centre to blend with the new types of flats that would be developed in the housing estate. The design was accepted by all parties concerned in the middle of 1980.

The Potong Pasir Community Centre Building Fund Committee was set up early in 1981 to raise some \$352,000. The first estimate was that the new centre would cost \$2.7 million. Government would grant almost \$2 million to meet the major part of the cost. Subsequently the community's target was increased to \$880,000. Even so the estimated costs were at best tentative.

The Fund Raising Committee was approved as an institution of public character for tax purposes for the period 1 October '80 to 30 September '83 or to raise a sum of \$1.126 million, whichever was earlier. The Committee worked out various ways to raise funds and these were successfully implemented in the months that followed. By the end of 1981 the Committee had collected more than \$900,000.

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In the meantime Government became more liberal with its grants for the development of community centres. Potong Pasir benefitted from this revision of policy. We are now informed that we have raised adequate funds for our needs, and further donations would not enjoy income tax exemptions.

There is no doubt that we shall need more funds to meet expenses for furnishing, outfitting, and equipping the new Community Centre. We must remember that this new centre will serve the people of Potong Pasir for many years to come. Its facilities must be adequate to meet the demands of the younger generation whose expectations are not only higher but will be rising in future.

Many donors of funds and enthusiastic helpers have contributed to the success of our fund raising efforts. Since my own official duties did not permit me to devote much time to work with the Fund Raising Committee, I am most grateful to Mr Phua Bah Lee, Senior Parliamentary Secretary (Defence) and MP for Tampines, for spending so much time and effort to deputise for me in the Committee's many activities.

Potong Pasir constituents will join me in thanking all those who by their generous donations and hard work contributed to the success of the fund raising efforts. When the Community Centre is completed, a brochure should be published to make proper acknowledgement to all who helped and all who donated generously. To me the overwhelming support received and the spontaneous and often unsolicited donations from so many people from all walks of life were most heart-warming. It goes to prove that given a worthy cause, our people do care and do volunteer their services or make donations. We thank all of them for their generosity.

The Fund Raising Committee must be praised for their excellent work. Particular mention should be made of the untiring efforts of its very capable Chairman, Mr Ung Gim Sei. His energy and enthusiasm were infectious. His overall strategy was ingenious and effective. He made use of attractive publicity, interesting cultural and theatrical performances, personal visits of well-known and popular screen and TV stars, trade fairs, dinners, cinema shows, and other activities that drew big crowds. Under his leadership the raising of almost \$1 million seemed so simple. It is true that he was very ably supported by many people, including Mr Chan Moon Kwai of the

Nanyang Siang Pau. Potong Pasir Constituency is indeed fortunate to have Mr Ung Gim Sei, Mr Chan Moon Kwai, and the support of the Nanyang Siang Pau. Our community leaders in cooperating closely with both Mr Ung Gim Sei and Mr Chan Moon Kwai gained much invaluable experience in the techniques of fund-raising.

Where the new Community Centre is concerned we are in a reasonably good position. Our funds problem is solved. The HDB architects and engineers have designed and supervised its construction. Its completion in the latter part of 1983 is on schedule. But though the work of our community leaders seems to be drawing to a close, much more must be done in making preparations to ensure that the Community Centre functions successfully.

By itself the Community Centre building, however well designed and equipped, can mean very little. The people of the Potong Pasir Constituency must be attracted to make good use of it. Its programmes and activities must be interesting, beneficial, relevant to today's younger people, and well organized. The popularity of the wide range of activities and facilities available or organized by the new Centre will ultimately determine its quality and usefulness. Its success will therefore depend on more and more well motivated leaders and young activists from the Constituency coming forward to involve themselves in community work, to organize various programmes and activities, and to attract more people to join in active and enthusiastic participation.

An Executive Committee has been quietly working and planning how best to ensure that this new Community Centre will effectively serve the needs not only of the 3634 families that will be moving into the new housing estate but also all the residents of our Constituency. Presently residents of Potong Pasir are already enjoying amenities at the Sennett and Lorong 8 Community Centres. There should be every effort made to get them to utilize the facilities and amenities of this new Centre as well.

In the years ahead we can envisage this new Community Centre gradually taking over the key role with the other two becoming supporting centres. This is why so much effort and so much money is being spent to develop this key centre. It is centrally located and should serve all our people in the Potong Pasir Constituency very well.

Currently our young activists are being encouraged to come forward to participate in community work. They can gain useful experience at both the Sennett and Lorong 9 Community Centres. We can never complain of having too many young community leaders to serve the people of the Potong Pasir Constituency! Over the last two decades there have been increased affluence, higher level of education, greater social consciousness, and more awareness of interdependence of people in our community. These are beneficial developments in our rapid process of social change. In Potong Pasir even the population is fast changing with so many new residents soon to move into the new housing estate. The need to develop community cohesiveness is urgent and deserves greater attention. This new Community Centre will have an important role to play in fostering greater community consciousness and public-spiritedness in our Constituency.

We must remember that our younger citizens may not take to the traditional activities of the older community centres with much enthusiasm. They prefer more up-to-date activities for self-improvement like computers, better physical education equipment, squash courts, cultural and literary activities. They prefer classes on relevant subjects of study and instruction in sophisticated and useful professional and technical fields. Community leaders must therefore understand their wishes, aspirations, and preferences and be well motivated to meet their demands. They must also be endowed with considerable idealism to work long hours for little or no recognition. They must think more of the common interests and the improvement, advancement, and general good of the whole Constituency.

In community work there will always be differences of opinion. Leaders are by definition people with firm convictions, with minds of their own. Differences of opinion will crop up regularly. We must not allow individual differences to become negative factors which lead to squabbles and arguments. We should avoid forming factions or special interest groups, but always remember the importance of cooperation and of pulling in the same direction for the common good. Otherwise individual disagreements and arguments can result in much effort, energy, and precious time being dissipated and little will be achieved.

Therefore in laying the foundation stone of this new Community Centre, I express the wish that from henceforth all our community leaders in Potong Pasir will pool their valuable experiences, share the joys and disappointments of community work, play down individual differences, and strive for consensus so that this new Community Centre can bring maximum benefits to everyone in Potong Pasir.

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