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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW,

AT THE OPENING OF THE MINTO ROAD COMMUNITY

CENTRE ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 1960.

The Minto Road Community Centre is the first of a series that will be built by the Ministry of Labour and Law. In the next few months, similar community centres will be built in Joo Chiat Road, Kampong Glam, Banda Street, Havelock Road, New Malay Settlement, Yan Kit Road, King George V Avenue, MacPherson Road, Owen Road, Nee Soon Village and Thong Hoe village. Building has already started on the first five. For the others, the sites are being prepared. More sites will in the course of this year be acquired. The Government will therefore be opening a new community centre every month in the immediate future.

In the past, the community centres were the few expensive and impressive buildings, largely in the suburban areas where the population is sparse. One such monument is the one at Buona Vista Road costing over \$400,000 in what is a

thinly populated area. The policy of the P.A.P. government is to build many modest, small and medium sized community centres costing about \$15,000 each, and to have one at every thickly populated area to provide the escape valve for the recreation of children in the day, and adults in the evening.

Our social problems are most pressing in the slum areas. But the lack of land and building space mean that every piece of land and every building must be utilised to its maximum. It is therefore the intention of the Social Welfare Department of the Ministry of Labour and Law to utilise these community centres for various purposes so that full use is made of them throughout the day and night. In the mornings, the building will be used as children's social centre where some education will be given to the tens of thousands of children who have not been able to find places in schools in the past. One room will be set aside as a creche to serve the needs of working mothers. In the afternoons, the building will be used as a youth club and a sports centre for the older children. In the evenings and at night, the building will be used by adults as a community centre in which there will be literacy classes, classes in singing, dancing, drama and other forms of healthy recreation. These are the uses of this community centre costing about \$15,000 for the building and sporting facilities which include badminton court, space for ping pong tables and other games.

In order to assist in the effective running of these community centres, the Ministry of Labour and Law will be sending trained organisers who can assist the leaders of the local population in the vicinity to maintain a varied and interesting programme.

But, ultimately, the success of our community scheme rests on the people themselves. The facilities and the minimum staff to run and maintain these centres efficiently will be provided by the State. But the leadership, the sense of friendship and belonging to one community must come from you people. I am confident that from you the people in the Minto Road area there are enough leaders who will be able to make full and effective use of the facilities which the Social Welfare Department of the Ministry of Labour and Law is providing. This is your community centre, built for your benefit and for your use. Make full use of it, and if there is any way in which we can improve the usefulness of this centre by increasing or improving the amenities that it offers, do not hesitate to put forward your suggestions. Let this community centre become a place for relaxation and recreation for yourselves and your sons and daughters. Let it be a meeting place where you can get to know your neighbours better and where communal barriers are broken down as you get to know your neighbours.

JANUARY 9, 1960.

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