SPEECH BY MR LEE KUAN YEW

PRIME MINISTER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION, AT ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

ON 30 JUN 90 AT THE KALLANG THEATRE AT 8.40 PM

The People's Association was established 30 years ago on 1 July 1960. The early community centres were plain and simple buildings put up in a hurry to help rally the neutral ground away from the Communists. They served their purpose. They helped us to the defeat the Communist United Front and so ensured political stability.

Today, we enjoy a much higher standard of living. In keeping with this progress many modern CCs resemble private clubs. Over the last 30 years, we have invested at cost (excluding land) about $170 million, in building and upgrading the CCs. The recurrent yearly expenditure of the PA is about $40 million. And the PA is fortunate to have voluntary help from many community leaders and well wishers like yourselves. Together, we have succeeded in creating a strong grassroots network that makes for social cohesion.

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Our progress must be for Singaporeans of all strata. All should have social and recreational facilities. If certain types of amenities are available only to the successful then we risk class divisiveness and social conflict as has happened in some countries.

Therefore, we have encouraged and supported the Singapore Labour Foundation (SLF) when they set up the Pasir Ris resort for workers. The SLF is building a golf and country club at Sungei Seletar. The Singapore Armed Forces Reservists' Association (SAFRA) is building a golf and country club for its members at Tanah Merah near Changi Airport. The Singapore Sports Council provides Olympic standard sports facilities for track and field events, and swimming pools. The PA's community centres cater to a wide range of residents in our new towns.

Younger Singaporeans want what they see people in other countries enjoy. Each generation of community centres is better than the last. They now offer aerobics, karaoke and ballroom dancing, together with computer, ballet and hobbycraft classes.

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The CCs have to move upmarket. Some community leaders have proposed that it is timely to convert the modern community centres to community clubs. I support this move.

A club gives its members a sense of belonging and ownership. It will give the community centres a touch of class, in keeping with the aspirations of a better educated generation. We should let each Community Centre Management Committee decide for itself.

Of course, the regulars will have membership cards. Those who do not want to join as members should be allowed to use the facilities of the club but they will not enjoy certain concessions. We must not neglect those who need and have enjoyed the amenities the community centres have provided.

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Ten community centres (Cheng San, Crawford, Fengshan, Hong Kah South, Kampong Kembangan, Kolam Ayer, Marine Parade, Serangoon Gardens, Tampines North and Yuhua) have decided to become community clubs.

They offer upmarket programmes such as computers and ballroom dancing. But they also offer the regular activities to provide traditional Chinese, Malay and Indian cultural programmes.

But what makes clubs or centres successful is the life that community leaders and the volunteer helpers breathe into them. Their continuing enthusiasm and commitment are crucial to success.

The 114 CCs offer an extensive network of wide-ranging facilities to cater to all Singaporeans. They have improved the quality of life in Singapore. Together we must build on what has been achieved.

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