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Information Division, Ministry of Culture, City Hall, Singapore 0617 • TEL: 3378191 ext. 4269, 4270, 4271 / 3362207 / 3362271

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SPEECH BY MR LEE YOCK SUAN, MINISTER OF STATE (FINANCE) AND
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION, AT THE PEOPLE'S
ASSOCIATION AWARDS PRESENTATION CEREMONY HELD AT THE
SINGAPORE CONFERENCE HALL ON MONDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 1984 AT
8.00 PM

It is my pleasure this evening to present PA Long Service Awards to 212 Community Centre Management Committee (CCMC) and Women's Sub-Committee (WSC) members. Of them, 18 CCMC members have served the community continuously and devotedly for 20 years. They are among the first batch of 155 CCMC members who were appointed on 2 October 1964. To devote 20 years of one's life to voluntary community service is a great sacrifice and noble accomplishment. In appreciation of their long dedication and service, they will be awarded with Gold Medals. This evening, we will also present 15-year Long Service Silver Medals to 85 CCMC and WSC members and 10-year Long Service Certificates to 109 CCMC and WSC members.

In addition this year for the first time, the PA will also present 5-year Long Service Awards to 869 CCMC and WSC members. They will receive their certificates at separate functions to be held at their respective community centres.

These community leaders have played an important part to help shape and build a better Singapore. I hope that their example will serve as an inspiration to all. On behalf of the PA, I would like to congratulate all the recipients and to convey our deep appreciation to them.

This year the Marine Parade Community Centre has won the Community Centre of the Year Award for the second successive year, after having won it last year as well as CC Merit Awards in 1982 and 1981. The Centre did not rest on its laurels but maintained a high standard of service to provide a wide range of cultural, sports, educational, recreational and other wholesome activities for the residents. Its Computer Hobby Club and Radio Modeller's Club were outstanding. A Health Club and a Video Club were also set up last year to meet the emerging needs of the residents.

This year the winners of the CC Merit Awards are the Bras Basah Community Centre, the Cairnhill Community Centre and the Serangoon Gardens Community Centre. Besides achieving exceptional levels of activity, these CCs have each also excelled in at least one area of activity. The Bras Basah Community Centre, although small by today's standards, is known for its sports activities and photography. The Cairnhill Community Centre is noted for its success in organising bird-singing contests since 1965. The Serangoon Gardens Community Centre has been successful in catering to the varied needs and interests of its residents who are mainly from the middle and upper income groups. The community leaders and the staff of the four CCs deserve our special recognition.

The main objective of the CC of the Year and CC Merit Awards Scheme is to give recognition to CCs which have made significant contributions to community development and to encourage others to follow suit. There are comprehensive criteria and an objective scoring system to select the winners. With effect from 1985, the CC of the Year Award and the CC Merit Awards will be given to two categories of CCs. One category is the big modern CCs and the other the small CCs. It is obviously not possible for the smaller CCs to generate the same volume of activities as the larger ones. Nevertheless the small CCs also deserve to be encouraged.

It is gratifying to note that more and more people are making use of our community centres as reflected in their participation in centre activities. During the past four years the number of people enrolled in continuing-education, cultural and sports courses at the CCs has increased by 46%, from 79,000 in FY79 to 115,000 in FY83. This excludes the larger number of residents who participate in other functions organised by the CCs. Many CCs have embarked on new and meaningful programmes and services for the benefit of the people. The CCs have achieved much in the last two decades. Together, we must build on those achievements. We must also reach out to more Singaporeans to make even better use of our modern CCs which increasingly resemble well-equipped private clubs.

Our community centres must respond to the rapid social and economic progress and transformation which are occurring in Singapore. With an overwhelming majority of Singaporeans living in high-rise, high-density HDB flats, there will be increasing demand for sporting, recreational and outdoor activities.

A new generation of young Singaporeans with different experiences and expectations has grown up. As at June 1983, there were about 1.5 million or 60% of Singaporeans who were 30 years old or younger. They have grown up in an environment of comfort, security and material abundance. They are also more health-conscious and technology-oriented. They would go more for aerobics and computers, for example, rather than the more traditional activities.

Singaporeans are also living longer. There are now more than 250,000 people who are over 55 years old. This number will increase to almost 400,000 or 13% of our population by the end of this century. Our CCs will also have to cater to this expanding community of senior citizens.

With better education and employment opportunities, more and more working women will have to combine their careers with their household responsibilities. There is

therefore an urgent need to establish reliable and conveniently-located day-care centres for the children of these working mothers. This is an area where our community centres can make a useful contribution. The establishment of day-care centres at our CCs will also lead to better use of our CCs during the day.

Hence, the grassroot leadership must be able, using the means at their disposal, to mobilise and involve both young and old Singaporeans whose life styles and values are changing. In the process, we must strike a balance between the new attractions such as computer classes and sea-sports and the traditional interests such as Malay, Chinese and Indian dances and music.

However modern our CCs may become, our fundamental objective must be to foster community development and nation building. We should continue to organise wholesome group activities for the different racial, income, age and language groups to foster a harmonious and progressive multi-racial society. For example, the PA is in touch with the Malay community leaders to encourage greater Malay participation in community centre activities. Besides catering to traditional Malay activities such as bersilat and hadrah, we would also encourage more Malay residents to participate in activities which involve all Singaporeans, regardless of race, language or culture. The strength and survival of a nation depend upon its people sharing a common set of social and national values. This is particularly important in Singapore.

Finally I wish to thank all the community leaders gathered here today for your contributions in running the People's Association and our community centres and in mobilising the support of the masses for government policies. We should continue to work together, in close collaboration with the Citizens' Consultative Committees, Residents' Committees and other community organisations to build an even better future for ourselves and our descendants. With determination, dedication and diligence, we will succeed.