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**SPEECH BY MR LEE YOCK SUAN, ACTING MINISTER FOR LABOUR AND
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION, AT THE PEOPLE'S
ASSOCIATION AWARDS PRESENTATION CEREMONY HELD AT THE PUB
AUDITORIUM ON SATURDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 1985 AT 7.30 PM**

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all of you to this Tenth People's Association (PA) Awards Presentation Ceremony.

This evening, we are here to honour 141 Community Centre Management Committee (CCMC) and 32 Women's Sub-Committee (WSC) members who have devoted 10 years or more to community service. The Long Service Award is a token of our recognition for their dedicated service to the community. Their efforts and success in community development have helped Singapore to thrive as a harmonious, multi-racial country.

Since the inception of the PA Long Service Award Scheme in 1976, 1,295 CCMC and 194 WSC members have received their Long Service Awards.

The Community Centre of the Year Award was instituted in 1979 to accord recognition to community centres which have made significant contributions to community development. PA has decided to divide the community centres into two groups starting from this year. Group I comprises the modern community centres and Group II, the small community centres. It is more equitable for community centres to compete within their respective groups.

For Group I this year, the winner of the Community Centre of the Year Award is Serangoon Gardens Community Centre, and the winner of the Merit Award is Kreta Ayer

Community Centre. For Group II, the winner of the Community Centre of the Year Award is Kampong Glam Community Centre. The winners of the Merit Awards are Kampong Eunus Community Centre and Punggol Point Community Centre. I congratulate the community leaders and the staff of these community centres for their collective efforts and achievements.

On 1 July this year, the PA celebrated its 25th Anniversary. The PA was established on 1 July 1960 to help integrate the different racial, language and religious groups into a harmonious and cohesive nation through group participation in the activities of the community centres. The community centres then were simple one or two-storey zinc and wooden buildings. Nevertheless, they were successful in reaching out to the people by offering the basic needs of that time such as literacy, cooking and sewing classes, ping-pong and basketball.

The task of building and consolidating our multi-racial nation remains the same but the means and methods have to be updated to keep up with the times. Today, we have to build modern and spacious community centres to meet the increasingly sophisticated interests and needs of our better-educated and more affluent people. These up-to-date facilities are comparable to those found in some country clubs. We now have 61 modern community centres in 59 constituencies. Four more are being constructed in Yio Chu Kang, Clementi, Cheng San and West Coast.

However, we must not rest on our laurels. We must continue to improve on our facilities and activities, whilst phasing out those that have outlived their purposes. New community centres will have to be built to serve the residents who have moved to the HDB new towns which are springing up all over Singapore. Those smaller and older centres which are no longer useful will have to be closed to consolidate our resources in providing a better service to residents.

Depending on the demand for public housing, the Housing and Development Board is building or planning to build 12 new towns with a total of some 440,000 units of flats by the year 2000. These include estates like Hougang, Jurong East and West and Tampines which are already well developed. The PA has to tailor its community centre building programme to serve the needs of these residents. I am happy to announce that the Government has approved our Community Centre Development Programme for the period 1985 - 2000.

Under this Programme, the PA will build a sufficient number of modern community centres which should be well dispersed within each HDB estate so that they are within easy reach of most residents. Under this population catchment approach, each modern community centre will serve a population catchment of about 10,000 families living in the vicinity. On this basis, it is estimated that about 36 new community centres will have to be built over the next 15 years. The actual number and the timing will be subject to review depending on changing circumstances.

The PA has decided on this programme rather than concentrating the resources within a few larger, so-called 'super community centres' as previously proposed. Such super centres would have to be situated near the town centres which would not be convenient for most residents, especially senior citizens and working mothers who need child-care facilities. A larger number of well-dispersed modern centres will better serve as focal points for community activities within the various constituencies.

The funding arrangements for the modern community centres will be the same as at present i.e. for the basic facilities, the community will need to raise only the initial \$100,000. For the additional facilities, the community will have to pay half of the cost i.e. the Government will give a grant on a dollar-to-dollar basis.

The PA has consulted the Advisers and community leaders of Bukit Timah, Hong Kah, Yuhua, Tampines, Changkat, Eunos, Fengshan and Nee Soon concerning the building of modern community centres in their constituencies. Suitable sites have been identified and a timetable is being drawn up for fund-raising and implementation. The PA would like to encourage the residents to contribute to the building of the new community centres in order to forge a common identity, community spirit and sense of belonging.

Under the population catchment approach, it will not be feasible to provide every constituency in future with a modern community centre. The PA will have to make sure that the centres are not located too close to one another and that there are adequate population catchments to justify their construction. Some constituencies may not have suitable sites for modern centres. In such situations the Government will provide well-equipped void-deck community centres similar to those in Chong Boon and Ang Mo Kio. Inexpensive centres located in HDB void-decks or shophouses may also be provided in other locations as temporary facilities until the modern centres are completed. The temporary centres could then be converted to other uses, for example, as child-care centres.

Singapore's success in achieving a harmonious and stable multi-racial nation could not have been achieved without the support of many dedicated community leaders and volunteers as well as the population at large. On behalf of the Government and the PA, I would like to place on record our deep appreciation to all of you for your dedication, commitment and contribution to community service.

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