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PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR ONG TENG CHEONG, SECOND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AND PRESIDENT OF SINGAPORE BADMINTON ASSOCIATION,
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF SBA BUILDING AT GUILLEMARD ROAD
BY PRESIDENT WEE KIM WEE ON WEDNESDAY, 7 MAY 1986 AT 5.00 PM

Four years ago, when we came into the Singapore Badminton Association, we examined the causes of apparently dropping standards and skill in the game. We found it was more the case of our failure to keep abreast with other badminton playing countries. Our small population was a negative factor. Countries many times our size produced one all England champion, and we are expected to do the same to be rated equal. Because we did not produce champions, interest waned. The 30-year-old Singapore badminton hall was inadequate and overused. The Badminton Association's income from affiliates was less than the affiliation fee which the Association has to pay to the world body. Money for training and for local and overseas matches had to be solicited for each occasion. No coach would take up employment with an Association which did not quite know when or where the following month's revenue would come from.

Two immediate problems were apparent. One is the obvious need to provide better training facilities, including first class coaching. The other is to find the money to do it. A capital sum has to be found to build the facilities and to provide the income to support the facilities. The patron of our Association, Tan Sri Tan Chin Tuan, suggested that the two objectives can be met by putting up a building to provide training needs and have enough rentable areas to help defray recurrent costs. He generously offered \$1 million of his money and promised to help solicit from institutions in which he was influential.

The Association then set up committees to raise further funds and to plan and build. With hard work and good fortune, the building fund snowballed to around \$6 million -

\$1 million from Tan Sri Tan
 \$2 million from Ho Whye Chung
 \$1 million from the Singapore Turf Club
 \$800 thousand from the Shaw Foundation
 \$500 thousand from Mr Ho Yeow Koon
 \$500 thousand from Mr Ng Teng Fong
 and thousands from a large number of smaller donations.

On behalf of the Association, I record our sincere gratitude to all those who contributed so generously and to all those who worked so hard to make our hopes a reality.

This gleaming building, which our President has so kindly agreed to declare open, will provide the latest in training needs, including six badminton courts, a gymnasium, players hostel for both men and women, and an administrative centre. It also has some 2,000 square metres of rentable areas from which the money to support training activities would derive.

We are now set for the next and, perhaps, the more arduous task of revitalising interests in the game. It is a long-term and continuing effort. We would like all badminton players, supporters and well wishers to give us their considered views and constructive suggestions. If need be, we will set up a task force to study these suggestions and refine proposals for implementation.

It is now my honour to invite His Excellency our President to declare open our complex.

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