

# Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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SPEECH BY MR SIA KAH HUI, MINISTER OF STATE FOR LABOUR  
AND MP FOR UPPER SERANGOON CONSTITUENCY, AT THE OFFICIAL  
OPENING OF THE NEW UPPER SERANGOON COMMUNITY CENTRE AT  
SURIN AVENUE ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1980, AT 7.30 P.M.

The opening of this new community centre marks a milestone in community development in Upper Serangoon constituency. In 1975 we were made aware of the road widening project at Boundary Road and that a great slice of the former community centre land would be taken up by the new road. The government was able to give us the present two acre site good enough for the building of a community centre and a swimming pool. The construction of the swimming pool which is near completion and will be operational early next year has a different story. Tonight we are gathered here to celebrate the successful completion and official opening of this modern community centre building. Together with the swimming pool the whole complex should be able to meet almost all the recreational needs of the community around here.

The community centre project costs a total of about \$1.3 million (it will be very much more if the project is undertaken now). The government subsidy amounted to three-quarter million dollars while the balance of about \$600,000 was raised by the Building Fund Committee. The Building Fund Committee, Citizens' Consultative Committee, Community Centre Management Committee and other local civic organisations played an important role by organising various fund-raising activities for this new centre. I would like to thank all the various

committees members for their conscientious effort. All of them besides the giving of their time and energy, also gave generously to the building fund. It is a fact and a very important one that direct donations were solicited only from people in the Constituency and people who have public responsibilities in the Constituency. So, in a very true sense we can regard the Community Centre as our very own.

The residents of Upper Serangoon Constituency have every reason to be proud of their new Community Centre. This Centre is adequately equipped with a wide range of both indoor and outdoor facilities to cater to the varied needs of the residents. To meet the needs of the new generation, a special airconditioned room is set aside for the promotion of music. The music room is equipped with the latest musical instruments at great cost. Classes for various levels of proficiency are conducted by qualified music teachers. The support from the residents around is very encouraging. The promotion of music will become the Centre's specialised activity catering not only to the needs of the residents in Upper Serangoon but also neighbouring constituencies. The usual sports facilities like badminton, basketball and sepak takraw are available and the two squash courts at the annexe are a welcome addition.

We hope this modern and well-equipped centre can serve as a focal meeting place for the various sections of the community. It is the responsibility of both the Management Committee and staff of the Centre to ensure that residents make full use of the Centre. To achieve this objective, the Management Committee have to study the needs of the residents so that various programmes and activities could be planned to meet these needs. However, all the planning will come to nought if the staff are unable for various reasons to put the planning into effect. I am glad that the People's Association officials realise this. Its Chief Executive Director recently highlighted the fact that new centres with all the multifarious activities will require personnel possessing managerial, organisational and public relations skills, and also be socially sensitive and committed. This is a very tall order indeed. Are there many such people floating around? Still we have to try and get them. In order to get them he pleads for an upgrading of terms and conditions of service for the staff of community centres. I wholeheartedly support this. Members of the Management Committee are giving up their leisure hours to contribute their share in upgrading the welfare of the community. They can only be expected to give overall advice and general guidance, though some do help in the detail execution of the centre's activities. However, the burden of seeing to the smooth and effective operation of the centre must fall squarely on the shoulders of the staff. Unless we can compete with other sectors for a sufficient number of

high calibre staff the objective for setting up such a well-equipped centre cannot be realised. I would urge the People's Association therefore to set this, the recruitment of high calibre officers as one of its top priorities in view of the number of new community centres to be built in the next couple of years.

Having said that about the staff, I would like to come back to the Management Committee. Some of the Members of the Management Committee have been giving their services for a very long time, in fact some have been members right from the day the centre began functioning in the former discarded centre in 1965. They had given unselfishly of their time, talents and money. They deserve our heartfelt thanks. However, as time passes we know we have our limitations. There are times when the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. On top of that, new and more exciting social demands and norms surface and we therefore need new and willing young men and women to come and join the ranks to serve the community. I would urge those talented young people who are willing to give up a part of their leisure time to come forward and share in the task of building a healthy community in this part of our country. These are the leaders we are looking for.

However, it would serve no purpose if there are no participants. So I say the facilities of the new centre are open to all residents around. You are most welcome to make

full use of them. There is however, just one point I would like you to bear in mind. The facilities are available through the generosity of a large number of people in the Constituency. I would urge all of you who come here to regard this place as your very own, ie use the facilities with care and consideration for others - the furniture, the fittings, the toilet and the sport equipment and even the grass outside - look after them as though you had paid for them yourselves and as though you will have to pay for any damage made by you or others out of your own pockets too. In this way, I hope together we can maintain the facilities in tip-top condition at all times for the enjoyment of everyone.

Finally, I would like to thank all those involved in making tonight's function possible. I also want to thank everyone of you for coming.