

Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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Singapore

- 9 JAN 1982
ACC No. RARC

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14-1/82/01/01

ADDRESS BY MR TEH CHEANG WAN, MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT/
MP FOR GEYLANG WEST AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE GEYLANG WEST
RESIDENTS' COMMITTEE ZONE "A" CENTRE AT BLOCK 20, UPPER BOON KENG
ROAD ON ~~FRIDAY~~, 1 JANUARY 1982 AT 10.30 AM

I am very happy to be here with you this New Year morning for the opening of the new Geylang West Residents' Committee Zone "A" Centre.

The Residents' Committee is one of the most important pillars of any grassroot organisation. In Singapore where more than 70 per cent of the population live in public housing estates, the importance of Residents' Committees cannot be over-emphasised. The extensive public housing programme implemented by the PAP Government in the last 20 years has completely restructured Singapore society. The early days where you find different dialect or ethnic groups living in their own enclaves have completely disappeared. Yet it seemed not too long ago that one inevitably found the Hainanese concentrated in Bras Basah, the Cantonese in Kreta Ayer, the Teochews in Havelock, the Hokkiens in Tiong Bahru, the Indians in Anson and Serangoon and the Malays in Geylang Serai. Today, the public housing estate becomes a melting pot for all the different communities. A public housing estate is identified solely by its name, no longer its community grouping. The communities living in HDB estates today are truly a single Singaporean community.

Not too long ago too, it was the popular belief that the Malays, accustomed to their idyllic kampung life, will never accept highrise living in HDB estates. This is a misconception and a myth. Singapore Malays, according to the 1980 census, constitute 12.9 per cent of total households. However, the Malay community occupy 13.6 per cent of total HDB flats.

The Government has successfully provided for the physical development of Singapore, especially the development of new towns and public housing estates. However, the provision of such facilities is by no means a guarantee for successful community living in Singapore. Homes for the people, schools for education, sports complexes and playgrounds for recreation, town centres for shopping, roads and carparks for communication: the provision of all these can be likened to the setting up of a beautifully decorated stage with excellent props. But the ultimate success of any show depends on the actors and **actors alone**. The Republic of Singapore is spending billions of hard-earned dollars on HDB estates. All the facilities that our planners and architects can design and that Government can afford, have been provided. But without the co-operation of the people, we cannot have successful community living. To the overwhelming majority of Singaporeans, Singapore is their home and they have no other place to go to. Singaporeans therefore have no choice but to regard it their sacred duty and responsibility to help make Singapore a prosperous nation and HDB estates happy and pleasant communities to live in.

Residents' Committees have been set up to help achieve happy living. A good Residents' Committee can do much to turn a loosely-knit society into a cohesive community. The Residents' Committee, because of its dialogue with Government Departments, is able to provide invaluable feedback to assist in the formulation of policies.

Our Prime Minister has recently said that "Every generation has its quota of people who are socially active and committed, who want to get things done for their fellow citizens." Active Residents' Committee members certainly belong to our generation's socially active and committed people. I sincerely hope that all our dedicated Residents' Committee members will continue to give of their good work.

I would like to congratulate Zone "A" on the opening of its new centre. And last, but certainly not least, I would like to wish everybody a Happy New Year.