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SPEECH BY TAN ENG LIANG, CHAIRMAN, SINGAPORE SPORTS COUNCIL AT
THE SINGAPORE RECREATION CLUB'S CENTENARY CELEBRATION ON
24 JUNE 83 AT 8 PM

The English introduced various sports to Singapore. But in the first 50 years since the founding of Singapore in 1819, sports were confined mainly to the English gentry and the leisure class. The local population's interest in sports was understandably restricted to spectating.

However, the situation changed after 1880 when communal social clubs were founded. Clubs such as the Singapore Recreation Club, the Singapore Chinese Recreation Club, the Indian Association and the Singapore Malays Football Club, were instrumental in promoting sports and their efforts made sports acceptable in the eyes of the public.

The SRC, founded just 64 years after the landing of Raffles, has played a major role in fostering the emergence of a larger Singaporean community. Though originally conceived as a club to serve only the Eurasian community, it has been successful in confronting problems of adjustments in a rapidly changing society in multi-racial Singapore. Forging a cohesive community out of a welter of races, languages and creeds is never an easy matter. But the SRC has shown the way and become the pathfinder to communal harmony and coexistence.

As early as 1948, while other communal clubs were still clinging to the maxim of serving only their own communities, the late Sir George Oehlers, the past president of the SRC, had already

proposed that the Club should open its doors to non-Eurasians. It is to the credit of the SRC members that this proposal received growing support in subsequent years. In 1956, a category of subscribing membership, open to all persons of all communities, was introduced. Finally in 1963, to fulfil the vision that SRC should be a multi-racial club in every sense of the word, ordinary membership was open to persons of all communities residing in Singapore. This outstanding example, together with the Government's exhortation to de-communalise clubs, encouraged other community-based clubs to liberalise their entry regulations.

What I have related is but one major contribution made by the SRC in the national life of Singaporeans. The other I would like to mention is the Club's role in identifying itself with the national sporting scene by nurturing and developing state and international class sportsmen in such sports as hockey, cricket, track and field, and softball. In the last three decades, in particular, SRC members featured prominently in our national teams. Names like Mosbergen, Pennefather, Valberg, Barth and Nonis read like a sports Who's Who. In addition to this "national service" to sports by individuals and teams, the SRC also lent its facilities to a number of national sports associations as and when national interests beckoned.

With these observations, I would like to thank you, Mr President and members of the SRC for inviting me to share in the joy of your centenary celebration tonight. May there be many many more happy anniversaries to come.