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**SPEECH BY DR WONG KWEI CHEONG, MINISTER OF STATE
(TRADE AND INDUSTRY), AT THE CAIRNHILL CONSTITUENCY
NATIONAL DAY DINNER AND VARIETY SHOW TO CELEBRATE
THE 25 YEARS OF NATION BUILDING AND THE 19TH NATIONAL DAY
AND HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF
THE PEK KIO COMMUNITY CENTRE AT THE PEK KIO COMMUNITY
CENTRE, CAMBRIDGE ROAD ON TUESDAY, 21 AUGUST 1984 AT 7.30 PM**

It is my pleasure to be with you this evening to celebrate the 25 years of nation building and the 19th National Day. This occasion has special significance to the residents of Cairnhill as it marks the official opening of the Pek Kio Community Centre. Pek Kio Community Centre is the second community centre to be built in the Cairnhill Constituency within a short span of two years. In 1982 I was given the honour to officially open the Cairnhill Community Centre.

Tonight I feel honoured to be invited to officially open the Pek Kio Community Centre. I would like to congratulate the Cairnhill Constituency Pek Kio Community Centre Building Fund Committee for their efforts in raising the necessary funds. My congratulations go also to members of our grassroot organisations for their support in terms of money, time and effort in the building of the Pek Kio Community Centre. I must take this opportunity to thank Dr Lee Chiaw Meng, the former MP for Farrer Park, for his contributions when Pek Kio Community Centre was then part of the Farrer Park Constituency.

The new Pek Kio Community Centre stands on the site formerly occupied by the Cambridge Road Market. It has been equipped with many facilities, including two kindergarten classrooms, a home-craft room, a youth room and a library.

It also has a main office, a conference room and a multi-purpose hall. We have only completed the first phase of the Pek Kio Community Centre reconstruction programme. We will soon begin the second phase to provide more sporting facilities like squash courts, basketball courts and better body-building facilities to serve the needs of our residents. I hope our residents will make maximum use of all the facilities provided in the Centre so that this place will soon be packed with activities.

Community Centres have played a dominant role in the past in helping to build up a more cohesive society. A wide variety of activities ranging from cooking classes, dancing classes, and sports activities to martial arts were organised to bring closer together the residents of each and every constituency. Community Centres are managed by Management Committees drawn from citizens who may be clerks, factory workers, hawkers, taxi drivers or managing directors. For example as of June 1984, there were a total of 2,469 people serving in the various community centres as Community Centre Management Committee (CCMC) members. Of these people, 627 (26.3 per cent) were professional, technical and related workers; 414 (17.4 per cent) were managerial workers; 1,015 (42.6 per cent) were clerical, sales and service workers and 153 (6.4 per cent) were production workers and transport labourers.

Members of the CCMC are drawn from all walks of life in Singapore. They are in fact representatives of our people. The CCMCs together with the Citizens' Consultative Committees (CCCs) and the Residents' Committees (RCs) form a very important feedback network in our political system. These are truly our grassroot organisations and have played an important role in promoting various campaigns like the "Courtesy Campaign", "Speak Mandarin" Campaign, "Productivity Campaign" and "Save Energy" Campaign.

Grassroot leaders help to explain to the people the importance of such campaigns. They interact with our citizens in the markets and in the house-to-house visits and keep the Members of Parliament informed of all grouses and complaints. For example, members of the CCC keep in touch with the various hawkers' centres and help them to solve their problems with the various government ministries. The members of the RCs help the HDB officials to provide well-maintained lift services, better security and cleanliness for the residents. Indeed our grassroot organisations have served as nerve centres linking the feelings and emotion of the people with our political leaders. Social stability was maintained, thus paving the way for our economic growth.

Singapore has achieved much over the last 25 years. Many of our citizens are now proud owners of HDB flats. In December 1964, there were only 54,312 HDB flats with 1,451 (three per cent) that were owner occupied. In December 1974, the total number of HDB flats built was increased to 187,189 with 75,337 (40 per cent) that were owner occupied. By the end of December 1984, there would have been 497,520 HDB flats built with 370,621 (74 per cent) that would be owner occupied. As a percentage of the voting population, Singapore can proudly claim to be the largest property owning democracy in the world.

In fact many of our citizens have regarded ownership of a HDB flat as a right and not as a privilege. In my Meet-the-People Sessions, I have come across many young men and women claiming that they are unable to get married because they are still on the waiting list for a HDB flat. I have even met graduates who have just joined the workforce but who have already put their names on the waiting list for a HDB flat. Not many of our citizens realise that in most parts of the world, a graduate will have to work many years before he can save up enough money to put down the first payment for the mortgage of his house.

Singapore citizens must not take their success for granted. Our present affluence is the result of the hard-work put in by our people over the last 25 years. More importantly, our success is the result of a good Government formed by our popularly elected leaders working in close rapport with their voters. This rapport that has been established between the political leadership and the people has served to cement together a multi-religious and multi-racial nation. Our grassroots organisations, particularly the CCCs, CCMCs and the RCs have played an important part in helping to build up this rapport between the political leaders and the people.

Singaporeans must learn to contribute to the growth of Singapore by helping to build up and sustain this linkage between the political leadership and the people of Singapore. They can do this through participating in community centre activities and by becoming members of the CCCs, CCMCs and the RCs. More young Singaporeans should be encouraged to join the grassroots organisations. For example as of June 1984, of the 2,469 CCMC members, only 872 (35.3 per cent) were under the age of 39 years. These are our young Singaporeans who have not experienced the conflicts, the pains and the sufferings of a war.

They are more concerned with advancing their own personal careers or businesses than to spend their time and energy in the process of nation building. Many of our more senior CCC and CCMC members have lived through the Japanese occupation and have seen with their own eyes the sufferings of war. These are the people who value the peace and stability that Singapore today enjoys. These are the people who realise the importance of building up this rapport between the Government and the people by serving as members of the grassroots organisations.

We have seen that in the last 25 years, we can succeed together by building up this rapport between the Government and the people. I am confident that over the next 25 years, this rapport will be further strengthened, and our future generations will continue to celebrate many more National Days. On this note, it is my pleasure to declare the new Pek Kio Community Centre open and to wish you a bright and prosperous future.

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