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PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY MR WONG KAN SENG, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS,
AT THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY/OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF
PHASE III OF SERANGOON GARDENS COUNTRY CLUB
ON SUNDAY, 23 APRIL 1995 AT 10.00 AM**

Serangoon Gardens is one of the oldest private housing estates in Singapore. Along with others such as Braddell Heights, Sennett, Frankel and Sembawang estates, it was built during the post-war period to meet the demand for landed properties.

Serangoon Gardens had undergone many changes. It was a tropical jungle before rubber plantations sprang up. The Japanese took advantage of the fertile soil in this area to plant tuba creepers. This was quickly replaced by farms and flower gardens after the war as there was a great demand for vegetables and cut-flowers. At its peak, it had as many as twenty flower gardens - hence, its fitting name, Serangoon Gardens.

The estate comprising 2,875 units of terrace, semi-detached and bungalow houses started off as a low-cost housing project. Their prices ranged from \$12,000 for a terrace house to \$21,000 for a bungalow. Times have certainly changed. The estate that was once surrounded by rural slums with only one bus route connecting it to other parts of Singapore has long become a coveted address for many Singaporeans. The value of the properties here has gone up more than 20 times since they were first bought by the original owners. All of them have benefitted from this steep appreciation in value. This is made possible only when there is stability and economic growth. This is what Singapore has: continuous stability and economic growth for more than 25 years. There is, therefore, a stake for every citizen

to ensure that this happy state of affairs remains for a long time to come. To achieve this we must have a population that continually strives to do its best, a leadership that serves the nation's interest, a strong will between the Government and the people to pursue common goals, and a recognition of the constraints and vulnerability we face. I believe this sense of common purpose and pursuit of common good does exist.

There is a rising awareness of the importance of quality of life. This is manifested in the 'clubbing' phenomenon that has been gaining momentum in the past ten years. Singaporeans now want to be members of private clubs. They are willing to pay and wait for their turn to join them. Amidst the stiff competition from other new recreational clubs, Serangoon Gardens Country Club has been able to hold its own. I am told that its membership fee at \$55,000 - a far cry from \$3,000 a decade ago - is the highest among the non-golfing clubs in Singapore.

The Club, which is a distinctive landmark in Serangoon Gardens, would not have been so successful had it not been responsive to the rising expectations of the residents. The ambitious upgrading programme in the past 12 years has transformed the Club from a zinc-roofed 'hut' to a sprawling multi-storey clubhouse complete with modern amenities for family recreation. The management committee should be congratulated for its foresight, dedication and tenacity.

I am heartened to note that the Club has kept its original mission to serve the residents of Serangoon Gardens. Eighty per cent of your members are local residents. But not all residents of Serangoon Gardens can afford to join the Club. There are many retirees residing in the estate. The residents in the 10,000 Housing and Development Board (HDB) flats are mostly young families. There are also a few welfare homes for

the senior citizens and the disadvantaged in the neighbourhood. The Club's members should, from time to time, reach out to them and bring cheer to their life.

The Club already has an admirable tradition in community service. I urge you to expand on your involvement with the community at large. There are many ways to do it. You can start by taking part or co-organising projects with grassroots organisations or the neighbourhood schools. Family Day and sports tournaments are some of the possibilities.

On this note, I would like to thank the management committee for inviting me to join you in this joyous occasion of your Club's 40th anniversary and the opening of facilities under Phase III of your development plan. I am confident that your leadership will build on its past achievements to meet the challenges ahead. I wish you all the best.

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