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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR WONG KAN SENG, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR BISHAN-TOA PAYOH GRC AT THE LAUNCHING OF HEALTH FAIR CUM HEALTH SCREENING PROGRAMME FOR THE ELDERLY IN CENTRAL SINGAPORE CDC DISTRICT ON SUNDAY, 9 APRIL 2000 AT 9.40 AM AT THE BISHAN COMMUNITY CLUB

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My parliamentary colleague, Mr Ibrahim Othman
Professor Ong Yong Yau
Chairman, Medical Board, Singapore General Hospital

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

I am happy to launch the Health Fair cum Health Screening
Programme for the Elderly in Central Singapore CDC district.

The issue of ageing population is a major concern for many developed and developing countries. Singapore is no exception because we have one of the fastest ageing populations in the world.

The report of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Ageing Population projected that senior citizens aged 65 and above would rise from 235,000 (or 7% of the population) in 1999 to almost 800,000 (or 19% of the population) by the year 2030. The rate of increase is alarming. Three main factors explain for it. First, the post-war/pre-Independence baby-boomers will be 65 years or older by 2030. Second, Singaporeans are living longer than before because of improvements in health and nutrition. Third, our birth rates are declining.

One key challenge presented by these trends is the tremendous stress that it will place on families as the primary source of care for our senior citizens. Hence, we should encourage our senior citizens to be more conscious of their health and live a healthy lifestyle. Statistics show that the prevalence of diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol level increased markedly from the age of 50 years. Those who are 50 years or older, 2 in 10 have diabetes, 4 in 10 have high cholesterol level and 5 in 10 have high blood pressure. Many of them were not aware that they have the disease. When detected early, these diseases can be treated to prevent severe disabilities and therefore avoid the high social and medical costs associated with them.

I am glad that the Central Singapore CDC has taken this initiative to collaborate with the Singapore General Hospital, Singapore National Eye

Centre and Bishan-Toa Payoh North Grassroots Organisations to launch such a comprehensive Health Fair and Health Screening Programme for our senior citizens. This is an important outreach programme. It helps to promote health awareness and disease prevention in our community.

This morning's health screening programme has a special feature. It not only gives a comprehensive check-up such as blood analysis and eye examination for the senior citizens but also gives a personalised report on their health conditions. This personalised report will be interpreted by a panel of volunteer doctors. It ensures that the senior citizens will have proper follow-up action if any disease is detected from the screening. All these medical checks would have cost them more than \$30 per person, but as part of the community programme, they need to pay only three dollars. By making it affordable, it brings health screening closer to the senior citizens.

The Central Singapore CDC together with the Singapore General Hospital and the Singapore National Eye Centre will provide health screening for 1000 senior citizens in the Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC over a one-year period. The CDC also plans to bring this Health Fair and Screening Programme to all the 14 divisions within the CDC district over the next three years. This community effort is commendable. It complements the national health screening programme announced recently by the Ministry of Health.

Keeping our ageing population healthy and active requires an integrated approach involving the health agencies and the local grassroots and civic organisations. It also requires the support and participation of the local community. I commend the CDC, the participating health agencies and the

grassroots organisations in Bishan-Toa Payoh North for their efforts in organising this health screening exercise.

I wish all of you good health and happiness.

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