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# PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH (TO BE DELIVERED IN CHINESE)  
BY GEORGE YONG-BOON YEO,  
MINISTER FOR INFORMATION AND THE ARTS  
AND MINISTER FOR HEALTH  
AT THE INSTALLATION CEREMONY OF NEW MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
OF THE TEO CHEW POIT IP HUAY KUAY  
ON 4 APRIL 1995 AT 3.00 PM  
AT THE TEOCHEW BUILDING, 97 TANK ROAD**

First I would like to thank the Management Committee of the Teo Chew Poit Ip Huay Kuan for inviting me to officiate at this installation ceremony.

A key aspect of the development of Chinese culture in the course of China's long history was the interaction between the centre and the regions. There is a larger Han culture which is homogeneous but, within it, there are many regional sub-cultures which are distinct. These regional cultures, including the various dialect groups, contributed to the dynamism and creativity of Chinese culture as a whole. Without this internal diversity, Chinese culture could not have adapted to changing world conditions.

The Teochews are a small dialect group in China. There are about 10 million Teochews in China out of a population of 1.2 billion, which is less than one per cent. But there are another six to eight million Teochews out of a total of about 50 million Chinese living outside mainland China, which is 15 per cent. In this century, the Chinese living outside China have been the most progressive because of their exposure to Western ideas and technologies. They are now playing a very important role in the modernisation of the Mainland. Because the Teochews form a significant part of the Chinese overseas, they play a role in the modernisation of China out of proportion to their actual numbers on the Mainland.

The Teochews make up about 20 per cent of the Chinese community in Singapore. They have made significant contributions to Singapore society in all fields. The Teochews have a long history in the region. They were in Singapore and the Riaux even before the British came in 1819. Even today there is a thriving Teochew community in Tanjong Pinang on Bintan Island.

We should preserve and develop the Teochew heritage in Singapore, both as part of worldwide Teochew culture and as part of Singapore culture. The Teochew Huay Kuan has taken the lead in doing this. For the last few years, it has organised an annual Teochew Week during which exhibitions and all kinds of activities are organised. Together with Ngee Ann Kongsi, a Teochew cultural centre will be established in the Teochew Building. Originally, the plan was to build this cultural centre at Ngee Ann City but with the availability of space in the Teochew Building when Tuan Mong School was closed, it is better that the cultural centre be located here. Planning work has already started and the cultural centre is expected to be opened in 1997. I congratulate the Teochew Huay Kuan and Ngee Ann Kongsi for this farsighted move.

The Teochews are part of a larger Chinese community in Singapore and part of a larger Singaporean community. It is therefore right that the Teochew Huay Kuan and Ngee Ann Kongsi should also make contributions to the larger Chinese community and the larger Singaporean community. Mr Wee Cho Yaw, the Chairman of the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clans Association, told me that Ngee Ann Kongsi has agreed to contribute \$1 million to the construction of the Chinese Heritage Centre at Nantah. It is good for the Teochew Huay Kuan to work in close cooperation with the Chinese Heritage Centre. Two years ago Ngee Ann Kongsi also contributed \$1 million to the Singapore International Foundation. The Singapore International Foundation is our new clan association for all Singaporeans who work and live overseas. All traditional clan associations should support the Singapore International Foundation.

I congratulate the Teo Chew Poit Ip Huay Kuan for its good work and I wish the new committee under the chairmanship of Teo Chiang Long success in all its undertakings.

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