

Speech by Mayor Zainudin Nordin
at the Launch of OnePeople.sg in conjunction with
CDC 10th Anniversary Racial Harmony Celebrations 2007
on Sunday, 27 May 2007 at 2:30 pm at The River Promenade

Guest of Honour, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong,

Dr Vivian Balakrishnan,
Minister for Community Development, Youth & Sports and
Second Minister for Information, Communications & the Arts,

Mayors,

My Parliamentary Colleagues,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I would like to welcome all of you to this afternoon's programme. Thank you for joining us for the first major event marking the 10th anniversary of the Community Development Councils.

10 Years of CDCs

2. 10 years ago, the CDCs were set up to bring Singaporeans closer by bonding the community and uplifting the needy. The role of the CDCs, however, is not simply to deliver social services or organise community programmes. Rather, our role is to empower individuals and organisations within our community to make a difference in both their own lives and the community's well being.

3. We believe that community building must be a bottom-up process, with Singaporeans stepping forward to contribute their ideas, energies and resources to meet the needs of the community. A true mark of a strong and cohesive society is the spirit of community help and mutual support which exists amongst its members.

4. Over the last ten years, the CDCs have been successful because of the generosity of many volunteers, grassroots leaders and community organisations in contributing to the community. This is heartening because it shows that many Singaporeans care about the less privileged and are passionate about bringing our communities closer together.

5. On behalf of all the CDCs, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and thank all individuals and organisations who have stepped forward to work with the CDCs to build a more cohesive, compassionate and harmonious community. The CDCs have come far over the last ten years, but we definitely would not have come this far without the willingness of so many Singaporeans to contribute to the community.

Racial Harmony Initiatives

6. In recent years, one of the areas that the CDCs have increasingly focused on is Racial Harmony. As a multi-racial society, racial harmony must be the bedrock of all community bonding efforts. Here at the CDCs, our commitment to help needy residents in our social assistance work, regardless of race, language or religion, reiterates our firm conviction that every Singaporean matters. In this regard, the CDCs work very closely with the 5 Self-Help Groups and other partners to ensure that no one is left behind.

7. In the past year, the CDCs have worked together on several initiatives. The Explorations in Ethnicity (or EiE) programme, which targets youths is one such effort. EiE provides participants with an opportunity to discuss racially sensitive issues in a safe and open environment. It also helps participants discern how they can best promote racial harmony in their various circles of interactions. Participants include trainee teachers who later go on to use these skills in their classrooms, as well as grassroots leaders heavily involved in racial harmony programmes. There have also been PRs as well as new Singaporeans joining us for the programme. Such collaborations between the CDCs helps us to maximize our resources and our reach to the community

Central Singapore Joint Social Service Centre

8. The Central Singapore Joint Social Service Centre (JSSC) is another fine example of a collaborative effort to reach out to all Singaporeans. Ten years ago, the Self Help Groups and the Central Singapore CDC came together to form the Central Singapore JSSC to provide joint social services and racial harmony programmes through the sharing of resources, knowledge and expertise. Over the years, the Central Singapore JSSC has organised many meaningful activities such as workshops, conferences, camps and public education programmes targeting both the youth as well as the larger community to bring people of different races closer together and promote better understanding of each other.

9. Today marks yet another milestone for Central Singapore JSSC as it expands its role by bringing more stakeholders together to take racial harmony to the next level. I would like to thank all those who have helped in this journey of moving Central Singapore JSSC forward. First I would like to thank Mr Leong Horn Kee for starting this journey, and all past and present Management Committee members, volunteers, donors, partners, supporters, and friends of the JSSC, for their contributions in helping us to take this step forward.

Conclusion

10. Let me end by encouraging individuals and community groups to join us in our efforts to promote racial harmony. The CDCs and various partners have lined up a series of programmes to celebrate racial harmony over the next 2 months. Close to 90 programmes are being organized to reach out to more than 60,000 participants. I encourage all of you to participate in these activities and join in our racial harmony celebrations. As we celebrate racial harmony, let us also treasure our bonds and our friendship that brings us together as one people.

Thank you.