

**Embargoed till delivery
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**SPEECH BY MR LIM SWEE SAY, MINISTER, PRIME
MINISTER'S OFFICE AND ADVISER TO BUONA VISTA
GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS FOR "SWAT
LITTERBUGS"! ON SATURDAY, 28 JULY 2007 AT
10.30AM AT SINGAPORE OK PARK (BESIDES BLK 12
HOLLAND AVENUE)**

North West CDC Councillors

Grassroots Leaders

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Boys and Girls

A very good morning to all of you

I am heartened to see so many of our students from different schools within the North West District, coming together to clean up the Buona Vista Estate at today's event, "SWAT LITTERBUGS"!, which is a key initiative under the North West Green Festival.

2 I was also told that over 600 of you staged a "protest" this morning led by 100 Republic Polytechnic students,

carrying placards with anti-littering messages to educate our fellow residents on the need and importance of keeping our estates clean.

NORTH WEST GREEN FESTIVAL

3 Caring for the environment in our neighbourhood is an integral part of the North West Community Development Council (CDC)'s mission to promote active citizenry. Thus, through the month-long North West Green Festival this July, we hope to encourage residents to cultivate a green culture within the district and to spread the message that everyone has a part to play in protecting the environment and in conserving resources.

4 This year's North West Green Festival focuses on three areas, namely; Energy Conservation, Public Health and Nature Appreciation. Today's project – "Swat Litterbugs!"— which is jointly spearheaded by North West CDC, Republic Polytechnic, National Environment Agency, Holland-Bukit

Panjang Town Council and Buona Vista Grassroots

Organisations falls under the focus area, Public Health.

5 This is also the finale of the month-long Green Festival. I hope that our students and residents have benefited greatly from the various programmes organised for you throughout this whole month, and that this will be a good start of a greener culture within the North West District.

6 Throughout the month-long Green Festival, more than 100,000 students and residents have benefited from the various activities organised by the CDC.

SINGAPORE'S OK

7 We are gathered here at this park for the finale of the Green Festival for a good reason. Does anyone here know the name of this park? Yes, this is the Singapore's OK! Sculpture Park. As you look around the park, you will see five copper sculpture which convey the messages and good practices such as 'Exercise Regularly', 'Check Your Temperature', 'Avoid

Crowded Places if Unwell’, ‘Keep Public Toilets Clean’, ‘Bag Your Rubbish’ and ‘Keep Places Clean and Free of Pests’. These copper sculptures serve as a reminder to practice good hygiene habits to counter health threats like SARS.

8 This Singapore’s OK! Sculpture Park was officially opened on 31 October 2004 after we fought and won the SARS epidemic in 2003. Singapore emerged OK through the holistic measures and efforts taken by the Government, Community and Grassroots Leaders and all Singaporeans. Although SARS is over, we cannot be sure that it would not return. Hence “Singapore’s OK” campaign of promoting good hygiene practices should continue to be a lifestyle of each Singaporean. Only then can we sustain our victory against epidemics such as SARS and dengue.

LITTERING PROBLEM

9 On this note, I would like to highlight that there is a rising trend of Litterbugs in Singapore. In 2005, close to 4,000

people were caught littering. Last year, the figure rose to 7,000 and 70% of the litterbugs caught last year were aged below 30. This is a worrying trend as it means that some of our youths are behaving irresponsibly towards the environment despite being better educated. Thus, we hope that by involving youths in community projects organised by North West CDC like Swat Litter Bugs!, they will accept a personal stake in the environment, take ownership of their actions and help spread the green culture to their friends.

10 I learnt that from the survey conducted by the Republic Polytechnic's students early this month, the commonly littered items include cigarette butts, tissue paper and plastic wrappers. And when asked why do people litter, 54% said that it is due to bad habits and 26% said that it is out of convenience!

11 Habits are hard to break especially bad habits. Hence, it is important for us to cultivate the right mindset early, that a healthy body begins from a clean and healthy environment.

PUBLIC HEALTH

12 Conversely, a littered environment will lead to numerous public health problems. Litters like cans and plastics bags left in the open, collect water and become good breeding sites for aedes mosquitoes, posing a threat to our lives. It is the responsibility of all Singaporeans not to create breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

13 I am glad that so many of you are stepping forward to undertake this project to spread anti-littering messages to our residents and further reinforce the importance of a clean environment.

CONCLUSION

14 With this, I hope that every one of you here can bring back with you, not the rubbish, but the values and messages of anti-littering. We hope that you can help to spread the

importance of keeping our public places clean to all your school mates and friends in your schools and community.

15 Together, we can play our part to make Singapore a cleaner and greener city. With your help, I can confidently tell you that 'I'm OK, You're Ok, Together, Singapore's OK'!

Thank you.
