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**OPENING ADDRESS FOR A/P HO PENG KEE, SENIOR MINISTER OF
STATE FOR LAW AND HOME AFFAIRS AT
FRENZ4FRENZ KICKOFF AT TAMPINES MALL ON 18 FEBRUARY 2006**

Good morning

Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcome to the Frenz4Frenz Kickoff. Happy to see all of you at this morning's event.

2 Many popular pop songs highlight the importance of friends. "You've Got A Friend"; "Stand By Me". "What Are Friends For?" "Ben". The list goes on. Indeed friends ie their words, actions, affect us, some times, positively, but also, often, influencing us in a negative way. In short, every youth potentially can make a strong impact on his or her friends' lives. This is true especially for teenagers.

Harnessing the Power of Friendship: Frenz4Frenz Campaign

3 That is why we are here today, to tap this amazing power of friendship amongst youths. Some of the students here today went for a camp last weekend, where they learnt how to harness their ability to influence their friends positively. I was told that the youths learnt three "Hows" at the camp: (1) How to "Watch Out" for the signs that indicate their friends need help, (2) How to "Be There" for their friends in the right way, and (3) When and How to get "Reinforcements", that is - when and how to seek help on their friends' behalf.

4 This camp was part of a larger, campaign, Frenz4Frenz. The Frenz4Frenz campaign utilises youth empowerment as a tool to curb juvenile delinquency. Whilst the more traditional approach of communicating anti-crime messages

through teachers, parents and the police can play its part, engaging the peers of at-risk youths to help and support their friends in staying out of trouble is also important. In particular, I am pleased that this campaign is the brainchild of a group of friends, four final-year students from Nanyang Technological University's School of Communication and Information. It is good that youths show initiative and take charge of a campaign for youths. You also work with other community organisations in devising relevant programmes that touch youths in a real way. Last weekend's camp, co-organised with four voluntary welfare organisations – Taman Bacaan, Thumbs Up!, Student Advisory Centre and the YMCA is an excellent example. I welcome this movement where our youths take initiative and am happy to support such endeavours as I have done in the past eg. Singapore Polytechnic's involvement in the Halfway House Sports Competition 2 months ago.

Study on Youth Empowering Programmes

5 A recent study was conducted by Dr Alfred Choi, Associate Professor at NTU's School of Communication and Information, and Ms Florence Tay, a Masters student from the school, to assess the public's interest in youth empowering programmes like Frenz4Frenz.

6 Of the 512 respondents chosen to reflect the demographic composition of Singapore, nearly 90% felt that it would be effective for youths to learn skills to help their friends at-risk of committing crime. More than two-thirds of parents said that they are interested to let their children learn the relevant skills. Our youths too, think it would be constructive to learn skills to help their peers who are at-risk. About 6 out of 10 secondary school students expressed interest in being empowered with skills to help friends who might be getting on the wrong side of the law. That is where projects like Frenz4Frenz come in. Through publicity efforts in schools, it aims to change students' mindset from a "can't-do" to a "can-do" attitude.

Launch of Frenz4Frenz Website and Interactive Book

7 In addition to the youth camp, this Frenz4Frenz campaign also sees the launch of the Frenz4Frenz website, Frenz4Frenz.com. From the website, youths will be able to find useful resources to help address common youth problems.

8 Yet another empowering tool which will be launched today is an interactive gamebook. This book is produced by another group of final year students at the School of Communication and Information. It is the first time that an interactive book has been written to teach and inspire teenagers to help their friends.

9 I understand that the response to these initiatives has been extremely positive. So far the campaign, which comprises the website, the interactive book, the empowerment camp and the publicity efforts in schools, has targeted about 10 schools in the east as a pilot project. I hope this effort can expand to other zones of Singapore.

Community Partnerships

10 The campaign is supported by the National Crime Prevention Council and the National Youth Council, and exemplifies close inter-ministry and community cooperation. I am encouraged too, that various voluntary welfare organisations with years of experience in helping youths are supporting this campaign. The Inter-Ministry Committee on Youth Crime or IMYC which I chair welcomes these efforts. Since 1995, IMYC has played an instrumental role in coordinating inter-ministerial efforts against youth crime through a broad range of measures that encompass areas of prevention and rehabilitation. ..

11 Another example of a strong community partnership has been the publication of *The Offline Guide for the Online Generation: A Cyber Wellness Resource*, which is a resource guide jointly produced by the National Youth Council and TOUCH Youth Services. The guide, which has been distributed to social service agencies, schools and community organisations, has also been

given to each of you today. It outlines youth online trends, dangers on the Internet, and existing resources to guide you in your everyday use of the Internet. I am certain you will find it useful in helping your friends cope with current cyber concerns such as Internet addiction and chatroom safety.

Conclusion

12 To conclude, I would like to once again congratulate Frenz4Frenz for taking the initiative to empower and encourage youths to make a difference in the lives of their friends around them. I wish this project every success. I urge everyone in the community – youths, parents, teachers to be part of this campaign and to lend your support. To the youths here today, check out the Frenz4Frenz website, look out for the upcoming interactive book, participate in the various programmes offered, be a volunteer at a voluntary welfare or youth organisation. Just know that whatever you do, no matter how big or how small, it will go a long way towards helping others. Don't just sit and watch the world go by, but make a difference wherever you are.

Thank you.