

**SPEECH BY MR MASAGOS ZULKIFLI, MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
AND SECOND MINISTER FOR HEALTH AT THE LAUNCH OF
KONG MENG SAN – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL COVID-19 RELIEF FUND
ON 19 DECEMBER 2020, 2.00PM - 3.30PM**

Ms Low Yen Ling, Chairman of Mayors' Committee

Ms Denise Phua, Mr Desmond Choo, Mr Alex Yam and Mr Mohd Fahmi Aliman
Mayors of the Community Development Councils

Venerable Sik Kwang Sheng, Abbot of Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery

Mr Lim Hock Yu, CE of PA

Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery Management Committee

Ladies and Gentlemen

Greetings

1 Good afternoon. It is my pleasure to attend the launch of the Kong Meng San - CDC COVID-19 Relief Fund today.

Impact of COVID-19 and support measures

2 We are coming to a year since COVID-19 first struck us. It was a challenging time for all of us.

- Many were uncertain when it started, very anxious about how the situation would pan out.
- But I am glad, almost after one year, I can say and I think all of us agree that we can say, we have pulled it through.

3 We saw how the pandemic had disrupted lives and brought to the forefront various social issues.

- Many individuals and families were affected by job losses, needing financial help.
- Many family relations, mental well-being were affected as many were stressed and anxious about their present as well as for the future.

- It underscored the need for holistic support – across social, financial, and emotional domains. As the stressors facing families are more complex and also intertwined.

4 Over the years, MSF has been steadily **strengthening our collaboration with community partners** to achieve two things. First, to improve social service delivery. Second, to make help more comprehensive, convenient and coordinated.

5 With COVID-19, MSF has **accelerated the pace of integration and collaboration to do more** for the vulnerable and those affected by the pandemic.

- We increased our efforts to systematically reach out to those who might have been affected by the pandemic, but perhaps they may not know where to seek help.
 - Earlier this year, MSF, MCCY and PA activated community partners and volunteers through the SG Cares Community Networks to reach out to low-income and vulnerable households. They checked on their well-being, and linked them up with further support, where needed.
- We also coordinated social support on the ground during the Circuit Breaker to support elderly and vulnerable individuals.
 - Together with the food charities and SSAs, MSF, NCSS and AIC worked together to provide them with essential aid such as meals and groceries. We wanted to make sure that nobody fell through the cracks.

6 As it also became an economic crisis, we needed to quickly save as many jobs as we could and cushion the impact on income.

- The Government decisively rolled out successive Budget packages and relief support measures for households and workers.
 - It is very easy to remember – our budget was close to \$200 billion in five budgets, and we committed about \$100 billion to overcoming COVID-19.
- Given the protracted economic impact of COVID-19, we decided to continue providing targeted support to those whose livelihoods are significantly impacted, and have less financial means and family support.

- Just a few days ago, we announced the launch of a new **COVID-19 Recovery Grant (or CRG)** for January 2021.
 - CRG will help individuals in need of financial assistance, due to a significant loss of income arising from the pandemic, while they actively search for a new job or engage in upskilling.

7 However, the Government cannot go about doing this alone.

- We need the private, public and people sectors to come together, partnering and collaborating with one another to support those in need.
- This creates a more caring and inclusive society. A home where we look out for the less fortunate among us. This will make us more resilient and cohesive as a society, and to make sure that no Singaporean is left behind.
- This is why I am heartened to see charitable organisations, such as Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery, working together with our CDCs to support those who have been financially affected by the pandemic, regardless of race, language or religion.

Launch of KMS – CDC COVID-19 Relief Fund

8 The \$4 million Kong Meng San - CDC COVID-19 Relief Fund is a timely initiative – made possible by the generosity and compassion of both organisations.

- It complements the various avenues of support for households financially affected by the pandemic.

9 I would like to thank

- The Management Committee of the Monastery for its generous donation, which have amounted to \$2 million and
- The CDCs for matching the Monastery’s contribution, dollar for dollar.

10 The CDCs, led by their respective Mayors, have also been steadily rallying the community, pulling together resources and coordinating help to support those in need.

- They have rolled out over **100** COVID-19 initiatives to date and helped more than **670,000** beneficiaries over the last nine months.

- Thank you for your hard work and dedication towards supporting those in need!

Conclusion

11 I would like to once again thank the Monastery and the CDCs for your strong commitment in uplifting the lives of the vulnerable and strengthening the community spirit during this very trying period.

12 Let us continue to put Singaporeans at the centre of everything we do, especially during this crisis. It is the little victories and celebrations, like phase 3, that are testament of the good work that we put in together – leaders, citizens, everybody. So that we can be better as a nation, and together, we can sail through this storm and emerge stronger together.

13 Thank you very much.