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***DELIVERING A FUTURE GENERATION OF HEALTHIER KIDS THROUGH
HEALTH PROMOTION BOARD'S HEALTHY SET MEALS***

***The "Health Promoting School Canteen" pilot programme
launched at Wellington Primary School ensures that
the healthier choice is the easier choice for children***

Parents of children studying at Wellington Primary School can now be assured that their children are consuming well-balanced diets when they have their meals in the school canteen, thanks to Health Promotion Board's (HPB) latest introduction of "Healthy Set Meals".

2 The pilot programme, "Health Promoting School Canteen" (HPSC), adopted by Wellington Primary School will see 1,500 students aged seven to 12 years, having well-balanced Healthy Set Meals on a daily basis at the school. These Healthy Set Meals, served in a compartmentalised tray similar to a bento box, incorporate the appropriate proportions of food from four main food groups – rice and alternatives¹, meat and alternatives², fruit and vegetables – ensuring that when students consume meals at the school, they will receive the right nutrients necessary for their growing needs.

3 This latest initiative is an enhancement of HPB's Healthy Eating in Schools Programme (HESP)³ and is part of broader efforts to address the growing obesity concern in Singapore, which has a synonymous link with food consumption patterns.

¹ Alternatives include noodles, bread, potatoes, thosai, chapathis

² Alternatives include beancurd, pulses (e.g. lentils, peas, beans)

³ Formerly known as the Model School Tuckshop Programme jointly administered by HPB and MOE

4 HPB's research has revealed that only 25% of children aged seven to 12 years, are served the recommended servings of vegetables and fruit daily. Additionally, among those aged 13-16 years, less than half are consuming the recommended servings of vegetables and fruit per day. Statistics also show that obesity among the young is 9.7%.

5 As many dietary preferences are inculcated from young, it is important to shape these early in life and empower children to make healthier choices throughout life. Through the HPSC programme, students will receive a variety of essential nutrients in the Healthy Set Meals and will also be able to cultivate their palates for healthier choices.

6 According to Health Promotion Board Chief Executive Officer, Ang Hak Seng, "One of HPB's strategies to tackle obesity is to move upstream to target the young. Studies reveal that when children are introduced to balanced diets during childhood, a critical period when their eating preferences develop, they are more likely to choose balanced meals as they proceed into adolescence and adulthood.

7 "We have targeted the school environment to influence the eating behaviour of school children, as they consume at least one to two meals per day in school canteens during the school term. When they consume the right balance of calories and nutrients for their growing bodies, they'll feel better, have more energy and probably do better in school too. Inculcating good eating habits at a young age increases the chance of children adopting well-balanced dietary practices in their adult life, which helps to reduce the risk of obesity.

8 "Through strategic collaborations with schools, we are offering Healthy Set Meals to students as the more convenient choice, consisting a balanced meal which includes vegetables and fruits, and also contains less oil and salt. The partnership with Wellington Primary School is strongly supported by the school leadership, canteen vendors and parents. Students will now consume healthy food that is affordable and tastes good," remarked Mr Ang.

10 In the development of this programme, HPB consulted with parents as they play a vital role in influencing the nutritional habits of children. HPB will also continue to work with the Parents Support Group to educate parents on healthy living.

11 Dietitians from HPB had met frequently with the five canteen vendors at Wellington Primary School to discuss and design the Healthy Set Meals for school children. The vendors were trained on healthier cooking methods and ways to incorporate healthier ingredients such as brown rice. The canteen vendors were also taught the right portion sizing for children.

12 Each canteen stall will serve two types of set meals per day (ie. a variety of 10 healthy set meals per day will be offered by the five vendors), and the menu will be changed every day to ensure variety. Each set meal will consist of rice and alternatives, meat and alternatives, vegetables, and fruits based on Singapore's dietary guidelines for children.

13 To impart a greater awareness of the importance of food nutrition, the Health Promoting School Canteen programme also offers a Nutriland Nutrition Exhibition to schools. The interactive components in the educational exhibition will communicate healthy eating messages in a fun and innovative manner to the students.

14 Mr Gary Tsu, Principal, Wellington Primary School, "We are delighted to partner the Health Promotion Board to pilot a new canteen menu that is nutritionally balanced and caters to the needs of our students. Not only does it help to champion healthy eating habits through a combination of education and provision of the Healthy Set Meal options, this strategic collaboration also provides our canteen vendors the opportunities to upgrade their knowledge, skills and values. This will enable them to prepare healthier choices that are affordable, delicious as well as attractive to the children. Through offering the healthy set meals which are balanced and nutritious, we are able, as an educational institution, to harness the school canteen as a valuable learning space for healthy lifestyle."