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SPEECH BY MR SIDEK SANIFF

SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND

MP FOR ALJUNIED GRC

AT THE URDU DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY (SINGAPORE)

4TH ANNUAL PRIZE GIVING CEREMONY

HELD ON SAT 20 MAR 99 AT 4.00 PM

IN TELOK KURAU SECONDARY SCHOOL HALL

Good Afternoon,

Your Excellency, High Commissioner of Pakistan, Mr Toheed Ahmad, President of Urdu  
Society, Mr Hyder Shah

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Boys and Girls

1 It gives me great pleasure to be here today to share with you the  
achievements of your students in learning the Urdu language.

2 Urdu is a beautiful language, known largely for its poetic grace and beauty. For example, the famous Urdu idiom "darya ku kuzeme bund karna" (to shrink an ocean into a pot).

3 To have a better understanding of this beautiful language we must look into the rich history of the Urdu language, which in turn reflects the rich traditions of its country of origin. Urdu was born and developed in India by Wali Dhakhni and flourished in the Indian sub-continent. Now Urdu is widely spoken in the world.

4 The literal meanings of the Urdu is "Iashkar", meaning "Powerful Army". Incidentally, the word "Iashkar" is one of many words that have been imported into the Malay language with the same meaning. I was also told that the best and latest Islamic intellectual works are in Urdu, written by Urdu speaking scholars.

5 I am very pleased to note that the Society has managed to attract not only young students but also adults to learn the Urdu language. Besides classes for students, I was told that the Society now conducts 4 adults' classes with a total enrolment of 48 adults. It is gratifying to note that some of these adults do not come from an Urdu speaking background but are learning the language for its pure beauty.

6 The Ministry had already recognized the Urdu language as a second language at the "N", "O" and "A" levels since 1990. I am glad to have been one of those decision makers who made the decision to include the five minority Indian languages as approved second languages for Indian Singaporeans.

7 The language received a further boost when the Ministry of Education included the Urdu language as an examination subject at the PSLE level in 1994. This has benefited the Urdu-speaking community tremendously as their children could now learn the language in their primary school years.

8 It is indeed very encouraging to note that in a short space of time, the number of students who registered to take Urdu as a Second Language with the Ministry of Education has increased tremendously. In July 1995, the Urdu Development Society started with 8 classes and had only 5 students who had registered to take examinations for Urdu as a Second Language.

9 Today, I am proud to announce that a total of 63 students are registered with the Ministry to take Urdu as a Non-Tamil Indian Language Examination subject out of a total enrolment of about 140 students. This increase is a clear endorsement of the Community's interest in learning and preserving their mother tongue.

10 The efforts of the President, the Committee members, the Principal and her team of dedicated teachers must not go unrecognized in this success.

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11 We must also thank all the parents and the students who have shown interest in learning the Urdu language.

12 I wish you all every success in your relentless efforts to serve the community.

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