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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY DR JOHN CHEN, MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY

AND MINISTER OF STATE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT,

AT THE LAUNCH OF THE FIRST SMRT COURTESY TRAIN CEREMONY ON 19 JULY 1999, 11.00 AM

AT TANAH MERAH MRT STATION

Good morning;

RADM (NS) Kwek Siaw Jin, Managing Director, Singapore MRT Ltd;

Ladies and Gentlemen

Over the years I would imagine many different types of trains have been launched at railway stations all over the world. Some have become quite famous, and most have provided quick and reliable transport for the many people who use them.

I can't imagine, however, that a Courtesy Train has ever been among them. There is, of course, a first time for everything. So it is my pleasure to be here this morning with you to launch this first Courtesy Train in support of the National Courtesy Campaign 1999.

Over many years, the Government has been relentlessly committed to the promotion of courtesy among Singaporeans. This has been undertaken through the annual National Courtesy Campaign which is now in its 21st year. The Singapore Courtesy Council (SCC), which plans and drives the annual National Courtesy Campaign, carried out a courtesy survey last year to gauge the effects of these campaigns. One of the survey findings showed that while the level of courtesy among Singaporeans has been increasing over the years, there are still some areas we can work on to make Singapore a more gracious society. Not surprisingly, the importance of extending courtesy to one another when providing or using public transport was an area particularly highlighted in the survey.

As a result, this year the National Courtesy Campaign organiser – the Singapore Courtesy Council, has decided to focus on the transport sector in order to promote courtesy and kindness among transport providers and users. That is the thinking behind the theme of this year's campaign: "Let's Move with Courtesy".

Being a major public transport provider, it is fitting that SMRT should take a leading role in this year's National Courtesy Campaign drive. I understand that this morning's launch of the Courtesy Train is but one of many activities SMRT has planned in support of the National Courtesy Campaign. SMRT has dedicated four of its trains to be Courtesy Trains which will carry the national courtesy campaign message on the face of the whole train and you will see these Courtesy trains plying the MRT system for the next two years. Such strongly focused advertising ensures high visibility, and is a good way to spread and reinforce the courtesy messages among Singaporeans and public transport users.

In conjunction with the launch of the Courtesy Train today, SMRT is also organising an Art Competition for children, aged 12 and below. This competition is designed to educate the young to practise courtesy on the MRT. I am told that publicity posters and entry forms for the Art Competition are available at all MRT stations. I urge all parents to encourage their children to take part in this competition, as it is important to start and practise courtesy from young.

What does courtesy on public transport mean? It simply means treating others as we would like to be treated in making the journey pleasant. It can mean simple gestures such as giving up seats to the elderly, not blocking the doorway of trains/buses, showing courtesy by not jostling up the escalators to be the first to reach the exit faregates. I believe that once we are convinced that these are the right things to do, that they are courteous and considerate acts, many of us would actively practise them. This will make travelling on public transport a comfortable, convenient and pleasant experience.

Everyone, therefore, has a role to play in promoting courtesy. It is my hope that the general public will respond positively to all the campaign activities organized by SMRT and the various public transport providers. If everyone makes a conscious

jc19990719b

effort to be courteous, soon courtesy will become our way of life.

In closing, I would like to commend SMRT for its initiative in supporting the national courtesy drive. I wish you every success in the organisation of your activities. It is with great pleasure that I now send the first Courtesy Train off on its mission to carry the courtesy message to Singaporeans in all corners of Singapore.

Let's move with Courtesy!

National Archives of Singapore