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Singapore Government

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SPEECH BY DR OW CHIN HOCK, MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AT THE SINGAPORE SCHOLARSHIP CERTIFICATE AWARD CEREMONY, 31 JUL 99, 1.40 PM, CARLTON HOTEL BALLROOM

Excellencies

Recipients of the Singapore Scholarship for 1999

Ladies and Gentlemen

National Archives of Singapore

On behalf of the Singapore Government, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you. We are gathered here this afternoon to honour the first batch of recipients of the Singapore Scholarship. The Singapore Scholarship was initiated by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong at the 6th ASEAN Summit in Hanoi in December 1998 where he announced that Singapore would offer a special undergraduate scholarship for ASEAN countries. PM Goh's initiative came in the midst of the Asian economic crisis. As PM Goh explained, the rationale behind this initiative was as follows:

"I am very disturbed by the thought that because of the economic crisis many ASEAN members will lose a few valuable years in educating their children. The loss will be the greatest in the case of the brightest who may miss a chance for higher education. These are not just family or individual setbacks. Not maximising a

generation's potential through lack of resources for education will seriously cripple the long-term growth prospects for the entire region. To alleviate the problem, Singapore will set aside S\$12 million under the Singapore Co-operation Programme to provide about 30 undergraduate scholarships a year for ASEAN students over the next three to four years for study in Singapore".

2 The Singapore Scholarship is a concrete example of ASEAN's self-reliance in the face of economic adversity. It is a clear signal to the world that ASEAN is capable of co-operating with and assisting each other in overcoming the adverse impact brought by the economic crisis. Although there are signs of economic recovery in the region, many in ASEAN are still struggling with the social implications of the economic crisis. As such, the Singapore Scholarship will remain relevant and needed as there are many bright students who would not be able to afford a university education.

3 The competition for the Scholarship was intense with a total of 250 applications from the ASEAN countries. I am delighted to see the first batch of 28 scholars here with us today. I bid you a special welcome to Singapore. All of you have done well previously and your good academic performances have enabled you to qualify for the courses at the Nanyang Technological University and the National University of Singapore. Most of you have been given the courses of your choice. Some of you would have to undergo a year of bridging courses, which would prepare you well for the first academic year next year.

4 I also note with pleasure that your selection of courses, which includes business studies, engineering, science, arts & social sciences, computer studies, reflects subjects relevant to the developmental needs of your respective countries. As scholars nominated by your governments, your mission is to ensure that you reap maximum benefit out of your education in Singapore over the next 3-4 years. You represent the hopes and aspirations of your generation in your respective countries. Hence, it is your duty to serve your country upon completion of your university education in Singapore. As such, it is our hope that you will study hard for your university degrees and make the most of your stay in Singapore. However, you should also find time to familiarise yourself with the social and cultural environment of Singapore during your stay here, especially through the social programmes planned for you. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its Singapore Cooperation Programme will do all it can to ensure that your stay in Singapore is fruitful, comfortable and memorable.

5 I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Ministry of Education, NUS and NTU for assisting MFA in implementing this scholarship scheme. We are confident that the scholars would be in good hands at NUS and NTU.

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6 Finally, let me thank the respective ASEAN governments for nominating their young and able citizens for the Singapore Scholarship. I am sure the young scholars will serve their countries with distinction upon completion of their undergraduate studies in Singapore.

7 Thank you.

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