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SPEECH BY MR MAH BOW TAN, MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHAIRMAN, NYAA
ADVISORY BOARD AT THE NYAA AWARD'S OPERATING AUTHORITY CERTIFICATE PRESENTATION
CEREMONY ON SATURDAY, 16 OCTOBER 1999 AT GOODWOOD PARK HOTEL, TUDOR BALLROOM, 10.05
AM

Prof. Leo Tan, Chairman, NYAA Council

Excellency,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today marks yet another milestone for the NYAA and I am delighted to see such a show of support for the programme. Looking at the growing number of operating authorities and participants in the scheme today, it is easy to assume that the NYAA programme is well understood. Easy but mistaken.

2 I once heard a description of the NYAA as a national youth scheme to reward achievement. Such a description is not altogether wrong. However, it does not quite

do justice to the NYAA and to all the youth participants, for the tremendous good that the scheme delivers to the community, not to mention their sacrifice of time and effort.

3 So what is the NYAA? The NYAA is a multi-disciplinary yet balanced, achievement-oriented yet non-competitive, structured yet totally voluntary national programme that challenges our youths to undertake community activities that test and develop their skills, hone their discipline, nurture their sense of responsibility and civic-mindedness, widen their horizons and sense of discovery and push their own limits of perseverance and dedication. In a nutshell, they help themselves by helping others.

4 This is the essence and spirit of the NYAA programme. The NYAA is not just about achievement, although it does indeed entail a formal system of recognition. But this recognition is rightly deserved, given the kind of devotion and commitment we have seen from our young participants, past and present.

5 The beauty and appeal of the NYAA Scheme lies in its flexibility. While it encourages individual improvement and achievement, the NYAA programme provides a spectrum of activities designed to promote community cohesion and bonding.

6 In particular, I am most heartened by the opportunities which the NYAA have created to enable youths with disabilities to participate on par with their more able-bodied peers, often with greater zeal.

7 It is not surprising then that barely seven years since its inauguration, the NYAA has seen its pool of participants grow from a mere 150 to more than 14,000 today.

8 Yet numbers do not tell the whole story. Beyond its numerical achievements, the success of the NYAA lies in the commitment and dedication of its many partners in the award operating authorities, be they heads of organisations, principals, teachers, or youth leaders—many of whom are in our audience here today.

9 All of you have generously given of yourselves to help inspire and support the young participants in their journey of self-development and discovery through the portals of the NYAA.

10 Thank you for your immense contribution to NYAA's success and more importantly, to the development of our youths into caring, responsible and effective citizens and leaders for our Singapore of tomorrow.

11 The fabric and substance of our society can only strengthen when we produce more citizens with character, courage and compassion, who are willing to put back into society far more than they have taken from it.

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12 The NYAA with its focus on nurturing our youths of today into effective citizens of tomorrow can contribute to our national effort to build a gracious society. Through your support of the NYAA programme, you too can make the difference for Singapore.

Thank you.

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