

Singapore Government

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**SPEECH BY DR OW CHIN HOCK, MINISTER OF STATE FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AT THE 2ND SINGAPORE SCHOLARSHIP
CERTIFICATE PRESENTATION CEREMONY, 1230 HRS,
SATURDAY 5 AUGUST 2000, MARINA MANDARIN BALLROOM**

Excellencies
Singapore Scholars
Ladies and Gentlemen

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On behalf of the Singapore Government, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to the second intake of Singapore Scholars. I am also delighted to see the inaugural intake of scholars here with us today.

2 The Singapore Scholarship was initiated by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong at the 6th ASEAN Summit in Hanoi in December 1998. That was in the midst of the Asian economic crisis when many ASEAN members were denied the potential to maximise the talent of their young people through higher education. In the case of the brightest who might miss a chance for higher

education due to a lack of resources, it would be a greater setback. As Prime Minister Goh had expressed then,

Quote

“ 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.”

Unquote

3 The Singapore Scholarship is a special undergraduate scholarship for ASEAN countries. We have set aside S\$12 million under the Singapore Cooperation Programme administered by my Ministry to provide 30 scholarships a year for ASEAN students to study in Singapore over the next two to three years.

4 This year, we received 300 applications for the Singapore Scholarship and selected the 30 scholars here today. We are glad that all the 9 ASEAN countries are represented in the second intake. All of you have qualified for courses either at Nanyang Technological University or the National University of Singapore based on your good academic results and entrance tests conducted by the two universities. Some of you would have to undergo a year of bridging courses, which would prepare you well for your undergraduate course.

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5 Take a leaf from your senior scholars who did well last year and have set a standard for you to follow. We are particularly pleased that two Indonesian scholars were selected for the Accelerated Master’s Programme (AMP) offered by NTU. One of them was ranked within the top 6% of his cohort last year.

6 You have selected courses such as business, engineering, science, communication and computer studies, which are relevant to the current needs of your countries. We are glad that our university professors are able to share their knowledge to enable you to realise your goals. At the same time, your

presence will add to the diverse mix of cultures at the universities. More importantly, your academic years in Singapore will serve to strengthen closer bonds between Singaporean students and their ASEAN counterparts.

7 I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Education Ministry, NUS and NTU for helping us to implement the Singapore Scholarship scheme. We are confident that our scholars are in good hands at NUS and NTU.

8 I would also like to thank the respective ASEAN governments for nominating their talented young citizens for the Singapore Scholarship. The Singapore Scholarship is a concrete example of cooperation among ASEAN countries and our self-reliance in adversity. Although the region is showing signs of economic recovery, many in ASEAN are still struggling with the social implications of the economic downturn. As such, the Singapore Scholarship will remain relevant for these bright students who may not be able to afford a university education.

9 And finally, a word to our scholars. As you have been nominated by your governments, your mission is to ensure that you reap maximum benefits from your education in Singapore over the next three to four years. There is nothing more important than human resource development in the training and nurturing of talented young citizens from ASEAN countries. A university education is essential in preparing the young with the necessary knowledge, logical thinking, analytical power and organisational skills to face the challenges of this new century. With globalisation, technological changes and the Internet age and e-commerce shrinking the world, it is crucial for you to equip yourself through quality education to play your role as future leaders of your countries. You represent the hopes and aspirations of your generation in your respective countries. Hence, it is your duty to serve your country with distinction upon completion of your university education in Singapore.

10 We hope that you would make the most of your university education here in Singapore so that you can do us and your country proud. I wish you all the best and may your stay in Singapore be most memorable and fruitful.

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