

**SPEECH BY GUEST-OF-HONOUR MS GRACE FU,
SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AT THE
55TH NCC TEACHER OFFICER COURSE GRADUATION
PARADE ON 10 NOVEMBER 2009 AT 1915 HRS, NCC
CAMPUS**

Dr Arthur Beng, Chairman NCC Council,

NCC Council Members,

Principals and Senior SAF Officers,

NCC Teacher Officers,

Parents,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

National Archives of Singapore

Good evening,

1. It gives me great pleasure to be here this evening at the Graduation Parade of the 55th NCC Teacher Officer Course. Let me first congratulate you, the graduands, for having

successfully completed the course. You have done well. My heartiest congratulations to you and your family members.

2. The successful completion of this three-week course marks the commencement of your journey in Teacher-Officer leadership and service. Your school has placed its trust and confidence in you to undertake the important task of leading, coaching and mentoring the cadets in your school. I believe this course has provided you with the foundation skills and knowledge to help you play this role.

Role of the Uniformed Groups

3. Through the years, the Uniformed Groups have become an integral part of our CCAs in our schools. They play a key role in the inculcation of values and teaching of soft skills. The unique experience which each cadet goes through, builds in them character traits like self-discipline, ruggedness and the 'can-do' spirit. This is in line with Ministry's emphasis in providing a holistic education to all our students.

4. The NCC has a long history and has contributed in no small way towards building these character traits. Many NCC cadets have done well in later life and in their careers, whether in the public or private sector. They bear testimony to the strong influence of NCC in shaping their character and ethos.

Remaining Relevant

5. In recognition of the pivotal role that UGs play in leadership training, citizenship education and character development, MOE announced the increase in funding for all Uniformed Groups earlier this year¹. The extra funding serves to further enhance the existing training programmes and provide a boost to the internationalisation efforts by the respective UGs. These measures have also been taken to ensure UGs continue to have the capacity to deliver quality programmes to our students.

¹ MOE will be increasing the total funding for UGs by approximately \$1.3 million each year, starting in 2009. The increased funding will include a \$4 per capita increase in training subsidy, a 100% increase in subsidy for overseas exchange programmes, a \$25 per student Uniform Grant to subsidise the purchase of UG uniform in Primary Schools and a \$650,000 Special Project Fund to encourage innovation and enhance the training programme of all 9 UGs.

6. In this connection, I am heartened to note that NCC seeks to remain relevant by constantly reviewing its programmes and drawing up new and interesting initiatives. I am told that one such idea involves the setting up of NCC clubs in our tertiary institutions while another project being explored allows students at the upper primary levels to have a taste of UG activities in the secondary schools through enrichment activities.

7. In addition to local programmes, NCC cadets are also given the opportunity to interact with foreign cadets in international exchange programmes. Through their participation, students in NCC are exposed to diverse cultures, allowing them to better appreciate cross-cultural differences. Students who are sent overseas under the SAF-NCC affiliation scheme also have the chance to try different activities such as mountain climbing, glider flying, white water rafting and desert trekking. Through these learning opportunities, they develop resilience and build up self confidence.

8. One example is Nur Annisa Binte Mohammad Zainal, an NCC cadet from Katong Convent who was selected to go to the United States for a two-week leadership camp with hundreds of US cadets. As one of the twelve representatives from Singapore, Annisa had to adapt quickly to a different set of cultural and physical expectations, while working together with the US cadets. In the American context, the activities were physically more demanding and all drill commands were given in English. In the face of the challenges, the Singaporean cadets were still expected to execute all instructions and perform all tasks to the same standards. Annisa and the other cadets met the challenges unwaveringly and benefited tremendously from the experience.

9. Another example is Mathias Joel Joshua, a cadet from Bedok North, who went to the Indian Desert as part of the Desert Trekking Delegation last year. For two weeks, Mathias, along with eleven other NCC cadets, experienced the harsh environment of the Indian Desert, where changes in temperature can be drastic and extreme. The experience was an excellent opportunity for the participants to develop mental strength and camaraderie with fellow trekkers as they

explored the desert on camels and struggled to cope with different forms of adversities.

Outstanding Role Models

10. While it is important to have interesting and meaningful programmes, the key to success lies with the teachers. All of us recognise that teachers who serve as positive role models leave an indelible mark on their students. They play a critical role in the character and values education of those under their charge. Indeed, in all of the activities, your cadets will look upon you, the teacher officer, as their role model and mentor.

11. James Yong, an NCC Cadet Officer, mooted the idea of an NCC-led Emergency Preparedness Training for the South East Community Development Council two years ago. Throughout the six months of conceptualisation and planning, his teacher officer provided unstinting support and guidance during their weekly discussions. When the pilot programme was eventually launched, it was well received. James was thereafter admitted to the Officer Cadet School where he was awarded the Sword of Honour and

subsequently the SAF Merit Scholarship. James attributed his achievements to his NCC teacher officer who believed in him and instilled in him a sense of confidence as well as providing him with opportunities to develop his leadership.

12. The above is an example of the pivotal role which teachers play in shaping their students, inspiring them to reach greater heights in their lives. I am confident you will continue to do your best for our children and for Singapore.

13. Let me end this speech with a quote from the famous psychologist, Carl Jung: *“One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings..”* Truly, a teacher affects eternity and we can never tell where the influence of a caring and inspiring teacher stops.

National Archives of Singapore

14. Finally, I would like to wish all graduands the very best as you return to your respective schools to lead your units. Have a fulfilling experience and help your cadets to grow.

15. Thank you.