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SPEECH BY DR NG ENG HEN, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, AT THE SINGAPORE BUDDHIST LODGE 32ND BURSARY AWARDS PRESENTATION ON SATURDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2010, 4.00PM, AT THE SINGAPORE BUDDHIST LODGE AUDITORIUM

Mr Lee Bock Guan, President of Singapore Buddhist Lodge

Mr Abu Bakar Maidin, President of Jamiyah Singapore

Mr Tan Tian Lye, Chairman of Taoist Federation

Mr R Dhinakaran, Vice-Chairman of Hindu Endowments Board

Principals, Teachers, Students

Ladies and gentlemen

1. Good afternoon. It gives me great pleasure to be here at the Singapore Buddhist Lodge's 32nd Bursary Awards Presentation Ceremony. My congratulations to the recipients of the awards.

Education Opportunities for All

2. It must be heartening to all Singaporeans to see this cooperation between Jamiyah Singapore, the Hindu Endowments Board and the Taoist Federation with the Singapore Buddhist Lodge to make these bursaries

available to needy students. The significance in this ceremony goes beyond the giving out of bursary awards. It also signals strongly that schools represent a common space in Singapore that unites people of different races and religions. Indeed, the Education Ministry's aim is to provide opportunities to all Singaporean students to uplift their lives through education. We provide many pathways that suit different needs, academic ability and aptitude. No Singaporean student will be denied these opportunities because they cannot afford it. In this regard, I am grateful for the Singapore Buddhist Lodge's generous contributions that complement MOE efforts in financial assistance.

3. With the community's help, we want to continually upgrade our education system. We are providing more teachers and building new facilities and schools so that all primary schools can go single session by 2016. Primary school principals and teachers say this will make a big impact on their ability to deliver more engaging lessons and help weaker students.

4. We have opened up new pathways for secondary students too. For instance, Normal (Academic) course students who do well in their N level exams need not take their O level exams. Instead they can choose to be directly admitted to polytechnics for a one-year foundation programme or to

the Higher NITEC course at the Institute of Technical Education (ITE). Two new specialised schools will be set up for Normal (Technical) course students with more hands-on learning opportunities. The existing Integrated Programme is also being expanded to seven more schools.

5. At the tertiary level, the Institute of Technical Education has been restructured into three regional campuses with state-of-the-art modern facilities in each. This allows each campus to build up its own niche of excellence and ensure that ITE courses are market-relevant and skills-based thus equipping students for the workforce.

6. Our polytechnics will be expanded by 20 per cent over the next four years. Polytechnic graduates can now upgrade themselves through the newly set up Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), which will partner five overseas universities to provide industry-relevant degrees.

7. The new publicly-funded Singapore University of Design and Technology (SUTD) will offer degree programmes in Engineering and Architecture, in collaboration with America's Massachusetts Institute of Technology and China's Zhejiang University. The Nanyang Technology University (NTU) will start a new medical school in partnership with Imperial

College London in 2013. The National University of Singapore (NUS) is also exploring a partnership with America's Yale University to set up a Yale-NUS Liberal Arts College. We are also funding new degree courses offered by the Lasalle College of the Arts and the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, in partnership with reputable foreign universities.

Importance of Community Involvement

8. Today's ceremony demonstrates the support of community groups like the Singapore Buddhist Lodge to provide the best education to all our children. Indeed, Singapore Buddhist Lodge has always recognised the importance of education and has been awarding bursaries to needy and disadvantaged children in primary and secondary schools, and tertiary institutions since 1978. I am heartened to know that, to date, bursaries worth more than \$10 million have been awarded to more than 20,000 needy students.

9. I am also pleased that in the past few years, Jamiyah Singapore, the Hindu Endowments Board and the Taoist Federation have collaborated with the Singapore Buddhist Lodge so that award recipients from the different races and faiths can benefit from the combined resources. This coming

together of leaders and organisations of different races and faiths with the sole purpose of promoting the welfare and interests of the needy and disadvantaged demonstrates our spirit of unity and cooperation. It is through such collaborations that we strengthen our social fabric and enhance social cohesion. This is indeed commendable.

Bursary Award Recipients

10. Today, more than 300 students from Junior Colleges, Institute of Technical Education, Polytechnics, Arts Institutions, and Universities will benefit from bursaries totaling nearly half a million dollars. Congratulations to all of you. In addition, the Singapore Buddhist Lodge Education Foundation will present the “Endeavour Award” to two outstanding students who have distinguished themselves not just academically, but in the non-academic field as well.

11. They are Jensen Chua, from Temasek Polytechnic and Yee Guang Yi, from Hwa Chong Institution. Jensen, who is in the top ten per cent of his Computer Engineering cohort was a Student Ambassador in the International Conference of Learning and Teaching, organised by Temasek Polytechnic’s Learning Academy this year. He has also participated in

various computer engineering competitions and has facilitated a computer engineering workshop. Jensen is humble and puts in his best in all his undertakings and wants to help others. Guang Yi, who has also performed well academically, is the vice-captain of his school's Wushu squad. He was a recipient of the Colours Award last year. Guang Yi is well-mannered and helpful to his peers and teachers. I congratulate you both on your outstanding achievements.

12. I would like to take this opportunity to wish all the recipients success in your endeavours and encourage you to continually strive for excellence. While our education system provides you with many opportunities, your success will ultimately depend on your individual effort. I hope that as you attain your goals, you will consider giving back to the community that has come together to support your educational aspirations. As you engage in community service work, you, in turn, will develop a sense of shared purpose, rootedness and commitment to society and to Singapore.

13. Thank you.