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Speech by Mr Noel Hon, Chairman, Singapore Courtesy Council at Friend of Singa Award Ceremony on Wednesday, 15 Sep 99, 10 am at the Jubilee Hall, Raffles Hotel

Assoc. Prof. Ho Peng Kee, Minister of State for Home Affairs, and Minister of State for Law

Council Members

Principals, teachers and students

Ladies and gentlemen.

Good morning and welcome to the 1999 Friend of Singa Award Ceremony. I would like to thank Assoc. Prof. Ho Peng Kee for agreeing to grace this Ceremony as our Guest-of-Honour.

2 I would also like to thank all the participating schools present today; your show of support for the Courtesy Campaign via your nominations of noteworthy students is much appreciated.

3 This year, the Friend of Singa programme enters its ninth year. It is heartening to note that over the years, students have not ceased to show courtesy. And of course, they have also not forgotten to recognise and acknowledge courtesy, a quality demonstrated by the 296 Friend of Singa Award nominations received this year, the highest number received since this programme was started in 1991. It is particularly touching to note that more than half of the nominations comes from primary schools.

4 It has not been an easy task for the Singapore Courtesy Council to select the ten Friends of Singa for this year. While these ten showed themselves to be outstanding examples of Courtesy in all aspects – kindness, helpfulness, politeness, generosity, honesty, courage - the courteous acts of all other nominated students are not to be less commended.

5 Together with parents, schools play a very important part in the development of the character of a child. In fact, there have been theories put forward that the responses of a child are "hardwired" at about 15 years of age and from this age it

becomes more and more difficult to change the basic behaviour and responses of a child.

6 For this reason, it is much easier for children to be spontaneously courteous and considerate and this becomes a normal reaction when children become adults in later years.

7 We must not underestimate the importance of courtesy. Whilst it makes life much more pleasant, it also has implications in our working life.

8 Singapore is becoming a developed nation and thus the rules of engagement between developed nations apply. When we were a developing nation, we are often excused for our lack of grace. As a developed nation, we will not be excused and if we do not mind our manners and exhibit the levels of courtesy and graciousness associated with developed nations, we will be seen as ugly, uncouth and arrogant.

9 Your generation will be the beneficiaries of the labours of the past generation. You will be the ones that will lead Singapore into the next Millennium. But together with the benefits of the prosperity and the development of Singapore comes responsibilities – social responsibilities like the care for the aged, volunteerism, care for the environment and the other aspects that make up a gracious society.

10 The Council is pleased to note that those of you here today have taken these responsibilities very seriously and have demonstrated not only courtesy but also kindness and care for your friends and fellow students.

11 My congratulations go to all of you.

12 Thank you.

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