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Singapore Government

MEDIA RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY MR PETER CHEN, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE,
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND MINISTRY OF TRADE &
INDUSTRY, AT RIVER VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL'S 45th SPEECH
AND PRIZE PRESENTATION DAY ON 28 JULY 2001, 2.00 PM**

Mr Tham Tuck Meng,
Principal, River Valley High School

Mr Lee Fee Huang,
Chairman, School Advisory Committee

Parents, Alumni, Teachers and Students

1. It gives me great pleasure to join you at this celebration to mark River Valley High School's 45th anniversary. The theme you have aptly chosen is "Celebrating Together". If you leaf through the pages of the history of the school, its traditions and achievements, it becomes clear why there is much to be proud of and to celebrate. I have always had a very positive image of your school.

HISTORY AND ACHIEVEMENTS

2. Your Principal Mr Tham recently gave me a crash course on the history of your school. I wonder how many of you know that your school had a very humble beginning in 1956 as Cheng Bao Xuexiao, a Chinese school located not in River Valley Road but in Seng Poh Road, off Alexandra Road. It was only in 1957 that it moved to the old Jalan Kuala, off River Valley Road. It was then re-named River Valley High School, a government Chinese middle school. When Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools were established in 1979 to preserve the unique culture and traditional values taught in the Chinese schools, River Valley High School was one of the nine secondary schools selected as SAP schools. Since then, your school and your staff have succeeded in providing a conducive environment for your pupils to be developed into well-rounded individuals with a keen understanding of and appreciation of Chinese culture and values. I note that the school is also mindful of the need to instil in the students a sensitive regard for the traditions and customs of other ethnic communities so that they will be conscious of their contribution to racial harmony.

3. With its fine tradition of excellence in academic and co-curricular activities, River Valley High School was also one of the first six secondary schools appointed as autonomous schools in 1994. This has given River Valley High more flexibility in planning and implementing school programmes to bring about better educational outcomes.

4. For the past five years, River Valley High School has been consistently ranked among the top secondary schools in Singapore. Last year, 100% of its graduands were admitted to junior colleges and more than 60% of them scored five or more distinctions in the G.C.E. 'O' Level Examinations. So far, three members of your alumni have been awarded the President's Scholarship and four are currently Members of Parliament.

5. For its fine performance in co-curricular activities, River Valley High has also received the Ministry of Education's Sustained Achievement Awards for the Arts, Physical Fitness and Uniformed Groups for the past two years. At the Singapore Youth Festival Central Judging held this year, River Valley High School garnered gold medals for all the six items that the school participated in. This is quite a remarkable achievement.

6. I would like to congratulate River Valley High School, along with four other secondary schools, for attaining the Singapore Quality Class award. The award is given by the Productivity and Standards Board to recognise organisational excellence. This is the first time that schools have received this

award, given previously only to top public agencies and companies. It is a clear indication that our schools' performance is comparable with that of world-class organisations.

7. An example of how our schools and students have made their mark internationally is when a student of River Valley High won a Bronze Medal at the International Olympiad for Mathematics held in Washington D.C. in July this year. At last year's Australian Mathematics Competition which attracted 500,000 international participants, six of the nine participants who achieved perfect scores were from Singapore. Of the six, three were students from River Valley High. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Principal, staff and students for your outstanding performance.

A FUTURE IN THE LIFE SCIENCES

8. As we gear ourselves up to develop the life sciences as a pillar of the economy, River Valley High School is at the forefront of efforts to equip students and teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge. The official opening of the West 3 Cluster Centre of Learning for Science and Technology today is the result of a concerted effort by River Valley High, together with other schools in the W3 Cluster, to provide the latest facilities and expertise to help students learn about the biomedical sciences. At the Centre, students and teachers benefit from hands-on sessions with trained personnel from the universities and polytechnics. I commend the National Science and Technology Board for its co-sponsorship of the Centre and the National University of Singapore, the Nanyang Technological University, the Institute of Molecular and Cellular Biology and the polytechnics for their partnership with our schools in this project.

9. The Ministry of Education (MOE) has also been conducting courses to train teachers to conduct programmes in the Life Sciences. I am glad that two teachers in River Valley High have participated in the MOE-initiated attachment programmes to the DNA Learning Centre in New York and the Monsanto Chesterfield Research Facilities in Missouri, USA to learn more about the latest in life sciences education. I am confident they will bring back with them new ideas and knowledge to share with and enthuse other Science teachers.

A NEW BUILDING

10. The next major milestone for River Valley High would be its upgrading and re-development as part of MOE's Programme for Rebuilding and Improving Existing Schools (PRIME). I understand that among the new

facilities planned for the school are a Mathematics-Science Centre, which aims to integrate the learning of mathematics, science and technology, and a Performing Arts Centre, which incorporates an 800-seat performing arts theatre and practice rooms and facilities for the school's various arts groups. These new facilities will certainly extend your students' learning opportunities by allowing them to explore their interests and talents in an enriched learning environment.

CLOSING REMARKS

11. I would like to offer my congratulations to the recipients of the Long Service Award and all prize-winners for your excellent academic and co-curricular achievements. I encourage alumni members, the School Advisory Committee, and the Parent-Teacher Association of River Valley High school to work closely with the Principal and teachers to provide the best education for the students.

12. As I began with some history, let me also close on a historical note. Again, I wonder how many of you know that your school motto , "*li de li gong, hua yu hua wan*" was written in 1966. And how many of you know that this was written by a committee which included your present Principal Mr Tham who was then a young teacher at the school. Apart from its interesting history, let me exhort you to continue to uphold the value embodied in the motto which calls upon you to uphold Virtue in yourself and render Service to society, to transform ignorance into knowledge and create a learning mind.

13. With that, I congratulate you once more on your tremendous achievements and wish you every success in future.

14. Thank you.