

Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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SPEECH BY MR LEE YIOK SENG, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT) AT THE PRIZE GIVING CEREMONY FOR
THE 1981 COURTESY CAMPAIGN AT THE PENTHOUSE NEGARA, MINISTRY OF
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON WEDNESDAY, 29 JULY 1981 AT 3.00 PM

Good afternoon. It gives me great pleasure to be here with you today.

As part of the activities for this year's Courtesy Campaign, the departments and statutory boards of the Ministry of National Development have organised five competitions. In addition, the departments and statutory boards have identified 186 outstanding courteous officers who will shortly be awarded commendation certificates. While we congratulate the winners and the commended, let us also encourage those who have not been successful. Let us remind ourselves that competitions and contests are only the means to an end. And to us, the end is to make courtesy our way of life. When we, as a people, become imbued with the desire to behave courteously to our fellow beings, there will be no need for contests, competitions and campaigns. The reward for courteous behaviour will not be prizes or certificates. It will be the receipt of similar courtesies from our fellow workers, our friends, our bosses and our families.

However, like a fragile plant, courtesy flourishes only when conditions are favourable. Courtesy takes root when there is reciprocity. A courteous act or greeting which is not acknowledged is destroyed, like a seed falling on barren ground. We can imagine how it feels to extend a greeting or perform a service without getting any response. We will feel snubbed and angry and we will be discouraged from acting courteously in future. Therefore a courteous act is complete only when it is reciprocated and appreciated.

Reciprocity in /2.

Reciprocity in courteous behaviour should be extended to all encounters, whether between peers, or between supervisors and subordinates, or between parents and children. In an Asian society like ours, the lines are clearly drawn between elders and young, bosses and employees. It is often difficult for those who are older or higher up on the social and organisational ladder to return courtesy with courtesy. But if we want to cultivate a courteous society, we must treat all who come into contact with us, be they our servants, our subordinates or our children, with the respect accorded to a fellow human being. If we are willing to spare a little time and thought and put ourselves in the other person's shoes, we will succeed in promoting the growth of courtesy. We will be nearer to the day when courtesy is truly our way of life.

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