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SPEECH BY DR YEO NING HONG, MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE, AT
THE CHILDREN'S PARTY ORGANISED BY THE KIM SENG COMMUNITY CENTRE
WOMEN'S SUB-COMMITTEE AT KIM SENG COMMUNITY CENTRE
ON SUNDAY, 8 AUGUST 1982 AT 7.30 PM

Let me first of all thank the Women's Sub-Committee for organising this children's party for our children in the constituency. Their dedication to our children in looking after their educational and recreational development throughout the entire year is indeed praiseworthy.

For the 17 years of our independence, we in Singapore have been able to achieve progress year after year. With progress, we also see each generation of children becoming better educated than that of the past. Our improving literacy rates clearly show that our educational policies have been working, and are thus able to prepare our children for better jobs. In our schools, our children in addition to learning about science, mathematics and languages also learn the habits of good citizenship. For example, they learn to be courteous to one another, to be helpful to their friends and neighbours, to keep their classes and their housing estates clean and to be loyal to our nation.

Because of our new clean and green environment, some of the habits that our children are acquiring are different from those of their elders, their parents and their grandparents. I was told of a story of how a little boy helped his grandmother overcome an old habit. The grandmother lived the greater part of her life in a squatter village and it was her usual habit, when the ashtray was full, to empty it outside her window. This old lady moved into a HDB flat recently and much to the unhappiness of her neighbours who lived beneath her flat she continued with her old habit. Her grandson, a bright young boy of 10 learnt about being courteous and the importance of keeping our neighbourhood clean,

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advised the grandmother not to empty the ashtray outside the window. The grandmother explained that it was alright and continued to do so. One day, the boy had a bright idea. Just before the grandmother could empty her ashtray one morning, he took the ashtray and the old lady up to their neighbours' flat two floors above and emptied the ashtray. Then he brought the grandmother back to the flat. Sure enough, their own clothings which were hanging out to dry were completely covered with ashes and cigarette butts. Since that day, the grandmother has not emptied her ashtray outside her window anymore. The story illustrates that with our new way of living together in HDB flats, new habits have got to be acquired.

Our children being more flexible in their attitudes are also best able to learn these habits quickly. In their respect for their elders, they can help their elders adjust to the new environment, the new Singapore. They can help break the ice between neighbours and help their parents to get to know their neighbours better. They can bring their parents and elders to social activities in the community centre to get to know fellow citizens. They can also help explain to the elders the importance of many of these social attributes of good citizenship that they acquire in schools. In their own ways, they can make a direct contribution to our national progress and make for a better Singapore that they will inherit.
