

**SPEECH BY PS (PMO & DEFENCE) CHIANG CHIE FOO  
AT ACS OLDHAM HALL THANKSGIVING DINNER, 19 SEP 2009**

Mr Koh Kok Hong, Chairman of ACS Oldham Hall Management Committee;  
Mr David Chua, Executive Director, ACS Oldham Hall;  
Management, Staff and Boarders of ACS Oldham Hall;  
Rev Malcolm Tan, Pastor-in-charge of Barker Road Methodist Church;  
Mr Benjamin Tan, Chairman of LCEC;  
Principals and Vice Principals from participating schools;  
Honoured Guests;  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening.

2. ACS was not my alma mater but my son, now serving National Service, was from ACS (Independent). As a parent of an “old boy” of the ACS family, and a member of Barker Road Methodist Church, it is my pleasure to be here at ACS Oldham Hall to celebrate this last major activity of the year with you.

**SINGAPORE – A HUB FOR TALENT**

3. I am told that the boarders here come from about a dozen countries – China, India, Southeast Asian and East Asian countries. This is encouraging as Singapore continues to strive to attract the best talents from all over the world. I am also heartened by the positive experiences that the boarders have as residents of the ACS Oldham Hall. Oldham Hall has a hive of activities that seek to develop the whole person, ranging from the academic domain to the social sphere. There are also programmes and activities that nurture your leadership abilities. Those of you in the Student Council will get a little more of these leadership exposures and experiences. This just goes to show that Singapore welcomes talent, and we place a premium in developing these talents, and allocate resources to this effort. A lot of investment goes into developing both local and foreign talent. And I am also glad that Oldham Hall is doing its part in raising funds to support bursary programmes for local children.

4. As a country with limited natural resources and facing a low fertility, talent is essential for us in Singapore. Indeed, there are some one

million foreigners working or studying here. While many are here on a transient basis to work or study, there are also many who would eventually want to make Singapore their home.

## **INTEGRATION IS KEY**

5. Schools play an important role in talent development for our young local and foreign talent. Schools also have an important role in value inculcation - they facilitate the imbibing of good values. They are also a ready environment for integration efforts for our young local and foreign talents. Indeed, both our schools and the boarding schools supported by the Ministry of Education reinforce each other in these key aspects of creating an environment for the all-round development of our students and integrating them into our social milieu. Your Chairman, Kok Hong, said earlier in his address that ACS Oldham Hall strives to be a “home away from home” for the boarders, who “interact with each other and have the opportunities to develop character and to imbibe good values”.

6. This is most encouraging, that ACS Oldham Hall is complementing the schools’ effort in talent development, value inculcation and integration. It is in schools and boarding schools where our young local and foreign students learn from each other an understanding of their differences, and build friendship, knowing that each of us is different yet can have common values and aspirations.

7. Most of you would have read the newspaper reports of the Prime Minister’s address to NTU students earlier this week. He has reiterated the importance of people in nation building and development. He has also reinforced Government’s policy on welcoming talent and integrate them into our environment. Integration is a two-way process. While we strongly advocate that Singaporeans welcome international students, make friends with them and learn about their cultures, we would also need to create opportunities for international students, like yourselves, to know Singapore. Indeed, we welcome you and want you to be part of our society. We hope that eventually you will better understand and appreciate Singapore’s social norms and cultural practices. When you do so, you will make many more local friends and you will find your stay in Singapore more enriching and meaningful.

## **INTEGRATION AMONG BOARDERS**

8. A boarding school like ACS Oldham Hall, whose aim is to help boarders develop character and imbibe worthy values, has a particular

advantage in deepening the integration process, since the boarders spend a larger part of their time here.

9. While you need to spend time studying, your primary goal for attending school here in Singapore, I would also strongly encourage all of you to socialise and make friends. On our part, Singaporeans should extend a friendly hand to international students, especially those who have just arrived. On this, I would want to commend BRMC for the “Befrienders Programme”, a programme that helps boarders settle into living in Singapore, and get to know Singapore and Singaporeans. For the boarders, take up the opportunity to interact with Singaporeans. Do not just revolve your activities around your boarder colleagues. Mix around with Singaporeans, work on projects with them together, and build friendships, build bridges. Also, give your time for volunteer work if you are able to. Enjoy your time here – study, make friends and perhaps even target to practise your profession here eventually. And I am sure some of you may even contemplate to make this place your home.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

10. As we gather here to celebrate Thanksgiving, I would also like to register a special note of thanks to the 30 or so Assistant House Masters and Mistresses who volunteer their time and effort in running the programmes at Oldham Hall, mentoring the boarders under their care, tending to their problems, and sometimes even coaching them in their studies.

11. Finally, I would want to congratulate the Management, Staff and Boarders of ACS Oldham Hall for putting together this event.

Have a great evening.

Thank you.