SPEECH BY LOH MIN EN, LEE HSIEN LOONG VALEDICTORIAN FOR SOTA'S CLASS OF 2025 AT THE SOTA AWARDS DAY 2026 ON 15 MAY 2026

Good morning Acting Minister Mr David Neo, Board Chairman Mr Loh Lik Peng, Mdm Goh Meei Yunn, Vice-Principals, SOTA Board Members, teachers, parents, fellow friends and distinguished guests.

It is a great honour to stand here today, not just to celebrate the achievements of the Class of 2025, but to reflect on how much we have grown as individuals. I am deeply grateful to be here, representing the cohort that means so much to me.

2325 days ago, we stepped foot into the place that would become our second home. I still remember thinking, "So this is where I will spend the next 6 years of my life." How naive I was to think that that was a long time. In what feels like a blink of an eye, we are here. Our concession cards have expired, no more $0.78 rides. No more 30-minute queues for cai fan from Aunty Rachel and Uncle Jason. These 6 years, spent alongside each and every one of you, have shaped us in ways we never imagined.

In true IB fashion (yes, I still remember what my teacher taught me, I hope they are proud!), I would like to begin with a research question: Who is the Class of 2025?

I would firstly say that we are a cohort that knows how to resiliently live life to the fullest. One moment, I would see classmates playing basketball at the makeshift hoop at the lockers, playing badminton, laughing loudly at the Year 6 study area and even cooking hotpot at times! And in the very next moment, they would be locked in, focussed on completing their projects.

Even on days when deadlines felt endless, we found strength to persevere and pull through.

Amidst all of this, many of us still continued to look beyond ourselves, choosing to serve others with empathy and to make meaningful contributions to the community through projects like Tags@SOTA, Wish Upon A Yarn, Artlink CAS and many other initiatives.

Even when COVID disrupted our earlier years, cancelling experiences we were looking forward to, we still found ways to connect with each other, be it through online calls or spontaneous Among Us games.

Through all of these moments, we became a cohort which embraced every experience that came our way. And of course, we did it together because this is who we are: a deeply supportive cohort.

Being in SOTA means being surrounded by immense talent every day. During showcase season, our school would transform into a flower shop, with bouquets, snacks and even broccoli heads being passed around. Every showcase, we celebrated each other's achievements and, without doubt, the endless effort that went into it. Being able to witness the artistic talent, in

Dance, Literary Arts, Film, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts, within this very cohort had truly been an honour. It is something that makes the SOTA experience so unique.

But our support for each other did not just end there. During stressful moments, we continued to support each other such as checking in on friends, studying together and sharing a scrumptious meal.

We did not do this alone:

To our teachers: You have created a space where we thoroughly enjoyed learning, felt safe to ask questions and learn from our mistakes.Thank you for believing in us and challenging us to grow as curious learners.

To our parents: You were there for us throughout the whole journey, even when we doubted ourselves. Thank you for your unwavering support and belief, it really means a lot to us.

Knowing that there was someone there for us, whether it be our friends, teachers or parents, gave us the strength to keep moving forward. It is this constant support that brought us closer and shaped us into a closely knitted cohort.

Compared to other schools, our cohort size may be relatively small, but that is what makes it so special. We had the privilege of truly getting to know one another, witnessing each other's growth throughout the 6 years.

Some of you might remember how our cohort group chat existed even before school began. We introduced ourselves, sharing the MRT lines that we took, hoping to make friends even before we had met. That was how I met my first friend, Jamie. It was also in this very group chat where we planned to meet together at the roundabout on the first day of school, so that we could enter the MPH together to "intimidate" the rest of the school. We are truly a peculiar cohort!

But one moment I am sure none of us would forget was our final assembly. We stood on stage together as one cohort and before we knew it, tears were streaming down our faces. To others, that moment might not seem special– we would still see each other during the IB examinations. But to us, it meant so much! In that moment, it became clear that we were not just cohort mates but people who had grown up alongside one another for one third of our lives! Our shared memories and bonds brought us to tears when it was time to say goodbye.

So, to the Class of 2025: Thank you for being resilient, supportive and close-knit. Thank you for all the laughter and shared memories that we will carry along with us today. It has been an honour to grow alongside every one of you.

And to the juniors, you will find yourselves standing where we are today, wondering where all the time went. Make the most of every opportunity, support one another and make this journey truly worthwhile.

As we step into the future, it may feel uncertain. But if there is one thing I believe in wholeheartedly, it is that each and every one of you is more than capable. We have learned how to adapt, how to think critically and creatively. I believe that we have the resilience to face whatever lies ahead and thrive in whatever paths we choose to take.

Many years from now, we may forget the question we answered in our English Language A Paper 2. But we will always remember the ones who sat next to us in class, journeyed with us through challenging days and made SOTA feel like home.

So as we step out of this Concert Hall and into the next chapter of our lives, I hope we carry with us the strength we found in each other and the unique SOTA spirit that defines us. Wherever life takes us, may we continue to be resilient, to keep growing as individuals and to care for the people around us and our community.

Thank you!