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SPEECH BY MR S ISWARAN, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF SAILSMART PROGRAMME ON FRIDAY, 19 JUNE 2009, AT 9.00AM AT THE NATIONAL SAILING CENTRE

President of Singapore Sailing Federation and Vice President of the International Sailing Federation, Mr Low Teo Ping

Chief Executive Officer of Singapore Sailing Federation, Mr Andrew Sanders

Distinguished Guests

Parents, Teachers and Students

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

1. It gives me great pleasure to be with you today at the official launch of the SailSmart programme. The programme is the result of the Singapore Sailing Federation's hard work and commitment to the sport and is the first of its kind to be introduced by a National Sports Association.

2. Sailing in Singapore is charting new frontiers. Riding on the waves of our athletes' outstanding performances at international competitions in recent years, more Singaporeans are taking to water sports, both competitively and recreationally. Since the year 2000, the Singapore Sailing Federation has also made a commitment to groom Singapore's young talent in sailing and to ensure sustainable results. Consequently, Singapore has now become one of Asia's top sailing nations at the junior and youth levels.

The SailSmart Programme

3. The launch of the SailSmart programme is timely and looks set to catalyse greater participation among young Singaporeans. The SailSmart programme reaches out to youth and engages them from a young age, teaching them the necessary techniques of sailing and useful life skills in a fun and interactive way. Participants of the programme will not only pick up sailing skills, but will also learn about planning and decision-making and gain knowledge about weather, tides and currents, protecting the environment and how to be sensible by the sea. The programme encourages experiential learning and getting students to apply what they learn to real situations. Its lessons have been designed to integrate with various aspects of the latest primary school curriculum in science, social studies and health education as well as the Ministry's focus on all-round character building.

Primary Education Review

4. The recent review of primary education has shown that balancing the teaching of knowledge and the development of skills and values is key to preparing our children for a more dynamic future. Hence, ongoing reform in our schools is focused on developing new educational environments that will not only equip our children with foundational knowledge but also develop in them skills and values that will prepare them to thrive in a globalised environment.

5. For instance, the review committee proposed the Programme for Active Learning (PAL) to create greater opportunities for children to step out of the classroom and participate in sports and outdoor education, as well as performing and visual arts activities like speech and drama, within school hours. The educational outcome we seek is that our children become more confident, resilient and better learners.

6. In that context, the SailSmart programme is an excellent platform for such active learning, being fun and engaging, while fostering important character attributes like confidence, tenacity and teamwork. I understand that the SailSmart programme was very well-received by students and teachers when it was piloted in eight primary schools last year. 11-year old Megan

Yong from Unity Primary shared that she learnt how to assess weather conditions and determine if it was going to rain, a skill that many of us in Singapore would find quite useful. Teachers learnt new ways to teach buoyancy, pulley systems and even the Archimedes' Principle while parents, like Mrs Lorraine Alcantra, whose son Lloyd took part in the trial last year, have also noticed that their children are more confident after the programme.

7. Sailing is a sport that very much depends on thinking skills as one is pitted against nature, and nature always throws up unexpected challenges. Sailors are trained to take all these changes in their stride – to be adaptable, to keep their eyes open and their wits about them at all times, to be good decision-makers and to care for themselves and their team mates. In this regard, sailing provides excellent life-skills training, skills that I hope every young person can pick up to thrive in our ever-changing world.

Conclusion

8. By pioneering such an initiative, the Singapore Sailing Federation has set a good example for the other National Sports Associations to emulate. They have exemplified the values of education and innovation by coming up with a multi-faceted programme which not only fulfils their role as a National Sports Association to promote and support their sport, but also helps to develop young Singaporeans who possess strong values and thinking,

communication and life skills.

9. I look forward to meeting all the young sailing enthusiasts present today. And, I wish you all a memorable and fun-filled day.