

**OPENING REMARKS BY MR ALVIN TAN
MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH &
MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
AT THE YOUTH CORPS LEADERS COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY,
SINGAPORE INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT
ON 22 MARCH 2025, 5.30PM TO 7.30PM**

1. President, thank you very much for your time. My Parliamentary and Cabinet colleague, MOS Rahayu Mazam. And to all of you today, especially our young leaders, a happy commencement.
2. I was just remarking to President and MOS Rahayu about how confident Priyanka, Khaliesah, and Jia Jun have been. They spoke with such confidence, and I thought, it's going to be such a tall order to be here. I also remarked that the future is indeed really bright, and just hearing them speak is a real testament. I think all of you are going to be very proud of your future.
3. Today is a very special day. Today we celebrate our Youth Corps Commencement Ceremony, and we confer 195 of you as our Youth Corps leaders. What have you done? Well, I think quite a lot. You have rallied over 700 youth volunteers and impacted over 1,000 people.
4. And as youth leaders and change makers, you represent our present and our future. It's just as important that we remember our past. Indeed, we cannot appreciate the present and shape the future without remembering where we've come from and who came before us.
5. This year is special because we celebrate 60 years of our nationhood, and so it's quite opportune that we look back at the past so that we can best meet the future. Look back at the past, meet the present and shape our future. So, let's start getting on the time machine and look back at our past.
6. What did Singapore look like 60 years ago for our youths? How many of you remember? I didn't, so I cannot speak, but I have people who tell me so. My parents lived in kampungs with their families. These are village houses with thatched roofs made of attap leaves, and to get to their toilet they had to leave their houses at night to a tin shed. They also had to work hard and sacrifice their studies to provide for their siblings and families. They dropped out of school to work in factories. So, they only had a secondary school education. But they also had a close-knit community that came together to help one another. This is not an uncommon Singaporean story 60 years ago. They and their generation did not have much, but they put in much work, to give us much.
7. Today, our generation has much, much more. We have modern homes. We have the best schools like this one. We also have the opportunity to pursue our dreams and aspirations. It is very different from my parents' time 60 years ago, but as the saying goes, to whom much has been given, much is also expected. That's why fast forward 50 years, from 60 years ago from 1965, then Minister of Culture, Community and Youth, and our current Prime Minister, Mr

Lawrence Wong, launched Youth Corps Singapore in 2014. Why did he launch Youth Corps? It's meant to empower and support our youths to ignite positive change in our society. These are the examples that we've seen by Priyanka, Jiao Jun, as well as Khaliesah. It's through community service and volunteering to give back, but also to foster a spirit of care and a spirit of commitment.

8. We celebrated 10 years of Youth Corps last year. Youth Corps has grown from just 90 youth leaders about 10, 11 years ago, to now a national youth movement of over 30,000 volunteers, and I'm so glad to welcome 195 of you, new leaders, to our incredible Youth Corps movement. A round of applause to all of you. It's evident that you've already made an impact and will no doubt make more.
9. Let me share stories of Donald Lee and Krishnamurthy Khavi, both from YCLP Cohort 32.
10. Donald is currently studying in Temasek Poly. He discovered his passion for serving the community and seniors while studying in ITE. In 2023, he volunteered with YCS' Neighbourhood Cares! as a project with Youth Corps to befriend isolated and lonely seniors. Donald went to train new volunteers and also designed programmes with Care Corner and rallied his peers, and friends to volunteer.
11. Khavi, too, is part of Cohort 32. She's currently studying in NTU and is passionate about empowering youth and children. She participated in the Kids Count project with Boon Lay's Youth Network, mentoring low-income students in numeracy and literacy skills. Both Donald and Khavi are two exemplars. Just two of the many inspiring exemplars amongst you today that we can find in our Youth Corps.
12. But, beyond that, Youth Corps has done significant amount of work in the community. In fact, last year alone, over 8,000 Youth Corps volunteers dedicated over 65,000 hours of service to different causes and impacted 5,000 people, including seniors and people with special needs, many of them we've seen today.
13. So, I've spoken about our past. Let's speak about our present and about our future, because just as our parents and grandparents have given us so much, so too, our present generation can give much. We've seen that today, but the question next, is how much more can we do for those who come after us. So, it's about remembering our past, stewarding our present and preparing our future, and here's what we're doing together for our future.
14. This SG60, MCCY, our National Youth Council and our partners are working on a year-long series of engagements with our youths. These build on the Forward SG exercise that Prime Minister Lawrence Wong launched to engage all of you on issues that matter to you most, and to work together to shape the future that you all want to build together.

15. So, this year of SG60, we are bringing together all the different ideas to culminate in an SG Youth plan. It's a five-year action plan created with you, our youths, and for you, our youths. We've so far had about 4,500 contributions from youths who shared their hopes and dreams for our Youth Corps. We also engaged some of you to co-create our new Youth Corps vision together, which President Tharman will reveal shortly, and even as we plan far, we also must plan near. So let me share a little bit of what we're doing together with you to plan near.
16. First, we will partner more Institutes of Higher Learning and youth organisations, the ones that we saw earlier, to provide opportunities for all of you of different backgrounds to learn and volunteer together. Let me cite a few examples. First, we are partnering with Nanyang Polytechnic School of Business Management. We're going to weave together volunteering opportunities into Nanyang Polytechnic's Teaching Enterprise Programme. From this month in March, students taking on this programme will volunteer with our Youth Corps to learn more about the social and community sector. That's just one example.
17. The second is we're working together with Emaan Catalyst to provide Youth Expedition Project opportunities for Malay, Muslim groups and students to do good in Singapore, and also beyond. Now, this Youth Expedition Programme is very helpful because you don't just stay in Singapore, but you go overseas, to Southeast Asia, to work with different groups, to volunteer with other youths.
18. We are also partnering with the National Youth Achievement Award. So, students in Institutes of Higher Learning, including ITE, can complete their requirements by taking part in volunteering opportunities with our Youth Corps.
19. Now we work with youths all the time. We know all of you are super busy, so what we're trying to do is make volunteering as easy and as bite size as possible, and one way to do so is through an online portal that we built called Discover Civic Action, so you can quickly access and quickly discover new volunteering opportunities and match your interests, and schedule. With a matching engine, it helps to track, and recommend volunteering opportunities, track your hours and badges, and reflect your experience and your commitment.
20. I mentioned earlier that it's important that we don't just volunteer in Singapore, but we must look beyond our shores, build bridges and bond with our friends from overseas. So we will create more opportunities for youth to volunteer with youths from ASEAN, China and India. I'll give you two examples. In December, our Youth Corps' Beyond Singapore Cluster led the YEP team to Jakarta on a project titled Project Hibiscus. Now this team volunteered with youths from the Jakarta based Indorelawan to befriend seniors and children, and also went on a learning journey to learn about small and medium businesses in Jakarta. They learnt the language, volunteered with the local youth organisation and learnt about how the locals build and create jobs for youths.

21. Next, we will also keep creating new projects for youths to contribute to our national needs. What kind of national needs? Well, in the area of healthcare, and also well-being.
22. For example, Youth Corps will enhance HealthStart. HealthStart is a community health programme for seniors organised in partnership with Tri Generation Homecare and Singapore General Hospital. So, mentors from both Tri-Gen as well as SGH will equip volunteers, with practical skills and experience to give you a deeper understanding of our healthcare system.
23. Volunteers can also access e-learning modules developed by healthcare professionals to prepare yourselves for careers as health coaches for seniors. Many of you have told us that mental well-being is important to you, so Youth Corps will also work with mental health and well-being partners to train what we call peer supporters, community peer supporters at Project Reground at the Red Box, which is near *SCAPE. This is to better support mental well-being and self-care programmes. So, these are all different programmes that we've created together with you and for you, and in the meantime, as soon to be newly admitted Youth Corps leaders, what can you do?
24. First, you can be an assistant mentor. You see the whole list of mentors and assistant mentors, so please, after you have been conferred, join as an assistant mentor for future YCLP cohorts. Now, mentorship for the National Youth Council and MCCY is critically important. I think it benefits all of us. I think it benefits future cohorts as well. In fact, I would say MOS Rahayu and myself have a mentor in President Tharman, and it's because of his coaching and his teaching, that I think we are able to contribute back to Singapore in different ways, so please join as an assistant mentor and please join our mentoring movement.
25. Second, you can be a volunteer coordinator for our Youth Corps volunteering programmes. Continue on the journey. And third, you can join our Youth Corps Cluster Network to support mental well-being, and also persons with special needs and seniors. Many of these are something that you're already interested in and have already been contributing to. So, congratulations again to all our Youth Corps leaders on your conferment.
26. As a tiny island, with not much but our people, you are most precious to us. Why? Because you are the product of our past, stewards of our present, and shapers of our future, and we cannot wait to see what more you can do for this precious nation of ours that we all call home. So, thank you very much for your attention. Thank you very much to President Tharman for gracing this special occasion with your presence, and congratulations! You all deserve the biggest round of applause.