

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR ZAINUL ABIDIN RASHEED
SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (FOREIGN AFFAIRS)
AND MP FOR CHENG SAN GRC
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF
THE INTERNATIONAL SEPAKTAKRAW REFEREE COURSE
AT 3.00 PM ON FRIDAY, 25 JUNE 1999
AT NATIONAL COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE

Presidents and Secretaries-General of ISTAF Member-Countries, Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I first set eyes on the 'sepak raga' it was truly in a village setting. It was very much a Malay game. Today, in the proverbial global village setting, having matured through the rough and tumble, Sepaktakraw looks set to charm the shrinking world. That's the big picture.

On a personal scale, the closest I came to active involvement in takraw was becoming a non-playing manager for the Singapore Press Holdings team. I suspect my MP colleague, the President of Perses, Mr Mohd Maidin BPM, also hailed from the same 'non-playing' status. Unlike the two of us, another MP colleague, a former President of Perses, Mr Yatiman Yusof, was once a takraw 'hero' on court. At his best, about 10-15 years ago, his takraw-batics put to shame many of the much younger players.

But those were the days. I am amazed how takraw has grown from strength to strength. From the innocent amateurish 'kampung' friendlies to the aura of international competition, takraw today holds a bright future. From the shores of South East Asia to mainland China, to even the Americas and perhaps even to Africa, takraw promises to be in the Olympics, one day. We'll wait for that.

Meanwhile, let me first extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Organising Committee for inviting me to officiate this prestigious event, the first ever been held.

The formation of the International Sepaktakraw Federation (ISTAF) in 1996 has given the impetus needed to bring sepaktakraw to new heights in the international scene.

The inclusion of sepaktakraw as a competitive event in the 11th Asian Games in Beijing 1990, the 12th Asian Games in Hiroshima and the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok, bears testimony to this fact.

The number of participating countries has also increased from the past two Games where eight countries competed in Beijing and nine in Hiroshima. Takraw has already drawn the interest of western countries and its popularity is encouragingly on the rise as an international game. This augurs well for its development.

With the active promotion and the widespread popularity of the game, we can be proud to say that it is played in Asia, North and South America, Europe, Australia and sooner or later in Africa. Sepaktakraw clubs and associations are sprouting up all over the world.

I am confident that the game will continue to spread and flourish to every corner of Asia, especially with the strong historical tradition and ties the game has in the Asian communities.

On the local front, I wish to see more non-Malays taking up the game, if not as a competitive sport, at least as a recreation. Takraw has the potential to be developed as a game of racial harmony, especially the takraw 'bulatan' or the circular game.

In my Constituency Punggol East of Cheng San, I have offered an incentive scheme to attract more non-Malay players. For every non-Malay player the Sports Club (CSC) gets to play, consistently for at least two years, the Club gets a monetary incentive of a one-time \$100 for each player. I know it's a small token incentive but the message is clear and I hope the Singapore Sports Council will also join me in promoting multi-racial harmony through games such as sepaktakraw.

I wish you all the very best and continued success. To our friends from abroad, I hope you will have a fruitful and enjoyable stay in Singapore. I know Mr Halim Kader and company are very good for such hospitality events.

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Thank you.

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