

SPEECH BY THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, MR. HO CHENG CHOON, AT THE OPENING OF THE HO CHENG CHOON CUP BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT ORGANISED BY THE SIMS AVENUE (GEYLANG EAST) COMMUNITY CENTRE ON 26.2.1965.

One of the aims of the Government in setting up community centre is the promotion of healthy cultural and recreational activities among the people, for through these activities we can help our youths to lead a healthy life, keep them from going astray and falling into evil ways, and thereby bring them up as good citizens for our country. It is on this same principle that the present basketball championship tournament is being held.

However, there are still some people who have an erroneous idea about sports activities. They think that these activities are unimportant, and one can very well go without. As a matter of fact, modern education places emphasis on moral, intellectual, and physical trainings, which in simple term, means the cultivation of character, the infusion of knowledge and the building-up of a sound body. It can therefore be seen that sports activities constitute an integral part of education for the younger generation.

Basketball is a game widely played by the young people of this country. It does not only discipline the body but also help to instil in them a sense of unity and co-operation. It is a collective game, and although the skills of the individual players are important, nevertheless, it is the unity and co-operation within the team, that will decide whether the team will win or lose the game. This also holds true in matters of greater importance, such as the management of the affairs of a state, particularly in this multi-racial society of ours, where inter-racial unity and co-operation are all the more essential. The people of Malaysia consist of the Chinese, Malay, Indian and other races. So if we want to build our country into a rich, strong and prosperous nation, we have to depend on the efforts and co-operation of all the races. It cannot be achieved by the efforts of just one particular race under the leadership of one particular communal political party, but by the common efforts of all the races working together under the leadership of a non-communal political party, just like basketball playing where no player can play his own game to display his skill without any regard for team co-operation.

Basketball matches can also help to cultivate a noble character, for in the process of the match the participants must show the spirit of sportsmanship, observe the rules and abide by the rulings of the referee. For this reason, a basketball match must be won in a proper way, and not by foul means. The same principle applies to political rivalry in a democratic society. Different political parties have different beliefs and different ideas, and in their inter-party rivalry, every party must maintain a noble party character. Only in this way will it command the respect of the people. But many political parties lack this quality. Recently, we commented on their shortcomings and some of these distinguished political personalities lost their reasoning and tried to cover up their shortcomings by hurling wanton abuses. This sort of conduct falls short of that expected of a gentleman. That these distinguished political personalities are suffering from this sort of pettiness may have been due to their lack of character training.

There are some twelve teams participating in the present tournament, which may be described as of a moderate scale, but the significance is nevertheless equally great. In every match, there will be a winner and a loser, and I do hope that each team will do its best to win the championship.

This basketball tournament has been made possible by the hard work of the Management Committee of this Community Centre and the members of the various Tournament Sub-Committees. Apart from expressing my appreciation for their spirit of service, I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to thank them for inviting me to officiate at this opening ceremony.

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