

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

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SPEECH BY DR. LEE CHIAW MENG, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE 9TH ANNUAL BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS FINAL HELD ON 12TH JULY, 1968 AT THE GAY WORLD STADIUM FROM 4.00 P.M. - 5.00 P.M.

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you this evening to watch the final match of your 9th Annual Inter-District Secondary Schools Basketball Tournament. I am aware that 200 teams have participated at inter-school level before no less than 40 teams finally earned their selection to represent the respective districts for this tournament and that it has taken you fully two months to run it.

I am particularly encouraged that the participation in this tournament is evenly spread among Chinese, English and Integrated schools. It was an accident of history that Basketball became stigmatised as a Chinese School game. During the colonial time, the Chinese schools had small playgrounds, and as a result, this game has become the only best choice of an activity which provides the most in the physical education programme. Government schools, most of them English schools, and English Aided schools were fortunately provided with large playing fields in the colonial period and as a result their games played in those schools could not be actively promoted in the Chinese schools.

As a consequence, in an area where we ought to find development of social cohesion, there was created a sharp division. It is fortunate that we have now our destiny in our own hands. Our School physical education programme must now be geared to our national needs of a more rugged, a more socially cohesive and a more healthy society.

In any tournament of any game, the importance is to participate and not necessarily to win. It should be more of an exhibition of team spirit rather than the personal display of physical skill. In a game like basketball, it is a strain on stamina, an exercise demanding the use of all the faculties of good judgement and organisation, a performance of great speed and skill with hands and feet, a display of fine sportsmanship — all to be executed in a small space of a courtyard.

Over the last 2 months, it must have been a grand display of these essential qualities of the sport. To-night, I have been fortunate to watch this final game, I am quite sure that the team with the best combination of skill and team work have won. I would like to congratulate the winning team for their achievements.

Finally, I am sure you would join me to congratulate the Committee of the Combined Secondary Schools' Sports Council, the staff of the Basketball convenor schools and the teachers in charge, for their hard work and dedication which made this annual tournament a success.