

MO:JUL/9/69(CULTURE)

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

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SPEECH BY MR. WEE TOON BOON, ACTING MINISTER FOR CULTURE,  
AT THE OPENING OF THE ART & CRAFTS EXHIBITION HELD IN  
CONJUNCTION WITH THE SINGAPORE YOUTH FESTIVAL ON WEDNESDAY,  
9TH JULY, 1969, AT 5.30 P.M. AT VICTORIA MEMORIAL HALL.

The Art and Crafts Exhibition is one of the many facets of the Singapore Youth Festival 1969. This year's Youth Festival is of special significance because it is a contribution by our youths to the nation-wide celebrations of the 150th Anniversary of the founding of Singapore.

The youths of today live in a Singapore which is altogether a different society from what it was in the early days of the pioneer. The Singapore of today is a vibrant society, a society which is throbbing with new ideas, entering new dimensions and moving to a new age of industry and technology. Attitudes and habits formed by our forefathers who lived an easy-going life encompassed in their communal compartments have changed and are changing. Today we find ourselves an independent and sovereign Republic composed of people who have come from different parts of Asia but/who through the process of history find themselves congregated together and charged with the responsibility and the mission to form a cohesive and progressive nation. Every single citizen whatever his racial origin, his religious and cultural pursuit, has an equal say in the present and the future of his country. The communal compartments of our forefathers have shrunk with the advance of education and greater knowledge which has opened new windows in our minds. Today, we are Singaporeans and the adults of the future, that is the youths of today, are the torch-bearers whose task will be to farther strengthen the concept of nation-hood - of one nation and of one people whose different cultural and religious pursuits would become nothing more than different aspects of national life. They will be responsible with their broader outlook and understanding of their environment to develop a community that is at one, not only in work and at play, but also in its culture-consciousness. A balanced education seeks to turn our children into whole individuals, who are alive to all aspects of their environment and have the capacity to respond positively to them. It also seeks to develop all their talents and potentialities, so that as adults they may attain a sense of fulfilment and make the highest contributions within their means to their fellow citizens.

The development of art and crafts is one of the means by which the multi-racial aspect of our national life can be made tangible. It is important to ensure that art continues to flourish even in an age when science and technology are so much in the ascendant in the lives of human beings. Life without art reduces human beings to a level that is hardly indistinguishable from the very lowest forms of life. Art expresses the very highest ideals and thoughts which only human beings are capable of. It satisfies their longing for beauty and expression of their innermost thoughts and feelings.

This Festival of Art and Crafts is a manifestation of the creative and aesthetic development of our youths. It displays their innate ability to respond creatively to various stimuli, exploiting their natural tendency to express themselves about our life and our environment and to appreciate things around them. This would help them, as future citizens, to make constructive contributions personally and socially towards a better and more rewarding life. It would also provide them an antidote for the pressures of day-to-day living.

I am particularly pleased that the whole Exhibition is built around the theme of "What Singapore means to me". In my view this theme portrays most appropriately the role of our youths in building a progressive and prosperous future for Singapore. It is, therefore, with great pleasure that I declare this Exhibition open.

9TH JULY, 1969.

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