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SPEECH BY MR TEH CHEANG WAN, MINISTER FOR NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT, AT THE NICHIREN SHOSHU YOUTH CULTURAL
FESTIVAL AT THE GAY WORLD STADIUM
ON SUNDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 1982 AT 8 PM

We all know that Singapore is a very small country without any natural resources. Its greatest asset is its population of 2.4 million human beings. People are the key to Singapore's survival, growth and prosperity. The old Chinese saying puts it aptly "要強國必先強民". Translated simply, it means that you must have a strong people before you can have a strong nation.

Singapore's future progress depends on our ability to organise, educate and train our people to their fullest potential. I feel we should address ourselves to three vital aspects of human development. To achieve economic progress, we have to equip people with knowledge and technical skills. We have to promote physical development to keep people healthy and physically fit. Last but not least important, we have to mould character through the inculcation of correct attitudes and values. In furtherance of this third aspect of human development, the government has recently introduced religious and moral instruction in schools. There is now an on-going debate on whether our children should be taught Confucian ethics in order to cultivate the qualities of patriotism, loyalty, sense of duty and obligation to society.

I am delighted to note that the Singapore Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist Association is actively involved in organising various activities to promote spiritual and cultural values. These activities support and supplement the government's programme on moral education. At the same time, they encourage young people to spend their leisure time together in pursuit of healthy activities.

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I am told that Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism originated from Japan and that Nichiren Shoshu lay organisations have now been established in many Western countries. This is not unexpected as today we live in a world of rapid communications and free inter-flow of ideas.

Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism are among the great religions of the world. Buddhism is an oriental philosophy that teaches the righteous way of living. Buddhist teachings and the Buddhist way of life had spawned many past civilisations and cultures. I believe that all religions teach us to practise charity and tolerance, lead us towards the path of righteousness and endeavour to help us achieve peace and harmony. We live in a world filled with turmoil, strife and uncertainty. Religion wields a moderating influence on human behaviour and alleviates human suffering provided people practise religious tolerance in place of religious fanaticism.

I am told that this evening's Youth Cultural Festival, which we are about to witness, involves some 2,000 young men and women in performance and 700 adults in backstage work. As MP for Geyland West, I am very delighted that Singapore Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist Association, a "home-grown" organisation so to speak, is able to organise such an impressive activity to promote culture and physical fitness and to inculcate the value of team spirit in our young people.

I wish Singapore Nichiren Shoshu Association a very successful evening. I hope the association continues to expand and to work for the well-being of Singapore.
