

SPEECH BY DR TAN ENG LIANG, SENIOR MINISTER  
OF STATE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT & CHAIRMAN  
OF THE SINGAPORE SPORTS COUNCIL, AT THE FAS  
PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE NATIONAL STADIUM  
CONFERENCE ROOM ON SATURDAY, 21 JUNE 1975  
AT 10.00 AM

---

In the last few months, the new national league of the Football Association of Singapore (FAS) has been the main topic of conversation among football officials, players and fans. This is most healthy and it comes as no surprise because a league, with its far-reaching implications, deserves the fullest attention of everyone who loves the game.

It is true that pre-publicity of the league has stirred up anxiety in certain quarters. This is a natural reaction because anything new and untried will normally elicit such responses. This morning I have been given the privilege to announce the selected teams in the national league. However, the details and any queries concerning the league will be answered by FAS later. The ten teams which have been selected on merit and given division one status are: Sembawang Constituency Sports Association, Jurong Town Sports Club, Toa Payoh United Football Club, Queenstown Football Club, Farrer Park United, Jalan Besar Football Club, Geylang Internationals, Changi Constituency Football Club, Upper Serangoon United Football Club and SAFSA.

Our congratulations go to these teams. They have passed the FAS's stiff merit test with flying colours and are deemed to be teams possessing the quality, energy and potential to succeed in the "brave new world of Singapore football".

The national league deserves the support of every sport-loving citizen. With the present interest in football reaching feverish heights, there is no better time than now to launch it. The FAS is to be complimented for its imaginative yet realistic approach to put football on a proper footing in Singapore. This league, therefore, is a historical landmark in the history of football in Singapore, and it hopes to end confusion and fragmentation that have been characteristic of Singapore football in the early 1970's.

The FAS is not yet in the position, financial or otherwise, to co-ordinate and organise the national league consisting of the existing 118 clubs which serve our population of only just 2.2 million people. Nowhere else in the football world has a national association been asked to shoulder such a heavy responsibility, proportionate to the population of the country.

By introducing this new league with 10 teams each in divisions 1, 2 and 3, the FAS hopes to drive home a sense of identification and loyalty to teams which are geographically distributed throughout our island Republic. Thus, on implementation of this league, FAS is also helping to bring football to the doorsteps of our people.

Each team, representing a geographical unit, will find a wider spectator support in its home centre, for its players as well as officials. Eventually, it is hoped that each team will project an image and tradition of its own and grow from strength to strength, contributing to the overall growth of the game in the Republic.

The league will inevitably inject quality into the game. It will generate further interest and convert onlookers to participate.

There need not be any fear that this new league will obliterate mass participation by its selectivity and exclusivity. Far from it. The process of mass participation will, in fact, be quickened.

The potential growth of the ten teams in the first division is limitless. For example, they can run ten minor inter-club leagues. With only each minor league attracting a minimum of ten teams, there will be 100 teams playing - generating tremendous mass participation. In effect, the FAS is delegating consolidation of the broader mass base of a football pyramid to the ten strong teams in the first division. Eventually, this mass base will become even broader when all the proposed 30 clubs are fully organised. When such a state of development is reached, the multiplication of players and supporters will become the order of the day.

This mass participation is in line with the Singapore Sports Council's policy of "Sports for All". Therefore, it has the fullest support of the Council. Besides spending thousands of dollars on renovating some of the facilities for the teams, the SSC has also persuaded the Development Bank of Singapore to donate \$45,000 and a Cup towards the organisation of this league. The SSC would therefore like to express and record its gratitude to DBS for its generosity and its tremendous interest in helping to promote sports for all.

I should like to urge the premier clubs to go full steam ahead in their membership drive and to seek the assistance of sponsors. There is plenty of hard work ahead.

To players and officials involved in the league, I wish them an enriching and maturing experience.

21 June 1975