

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT:

MC:JUL/39/75 (CULTURE)



SPEECH BY MR JEK YEUN THONG, MINISTER FOR CULTURE,  
AT THE COMBINED INAUGURATION OF PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION'S  
CENTRAL YOUTH COUNCIL AND REGIONAL YOUTH COUNCILS  
ON FRIDAY 18 JUL 75 AT 8.00 PM AT THE PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION

As a nation relying overwhelmingly on its human resources for survival and progress, youth development is vitally important to Singapore. The Government, realising this, has spared no effort towards the development of our youth. We are trying our best to give every young citizen a good education and training so that he can become a well-balanced individual and an useful digit in society.

Towards the same end, the Government has adopted a liberal policy on voluntary participation in youth services. Youth organisations have always received our support and encouragement.

The recent setting up of the National Youth Co-ordinating Committee to provide better co-ordination in youth affairs in Singapore and the launching of National Youth Service Awards Scheme to give recognition to contribution made by our youth are yet another examples of our concern with youth development.

The People's Association Youth Movement was launched in 1972. It has grown rapidly in the last three and a half years, with a total number of 81 youth groups and over 16,000 individual members to-date.

There have also been structural changes to provide further impetus to the growth of the Movement. The formation of the PA Central Youth Council and the five Regional Youth Councils is the result of such changes which we hope will provide a good foundation for a mass movement.

Now where do we go from here? This is a question the 82 of you sitting in the Central Youth Council and the Regional Youth Councils will have to ask and answer. The Councils should take care not to become merely super youth groups organising super activities. You have to provide directions and leadership for the whole Movement. That means you have to do a lot of thinking. One of the issues I think you definitely have to examine from time to time is the role of the Movement in the context of overall social scene in Singapore. The policies and programmes of the Youth Movement in my opinion cannot be detached from social realities. While I feel that the Movement should not be turned into a welfare agency, and should stand firm in its developmental role, we cannot, however, afford to be blind to the many social problems around us, especially those involving or affecting our young people. In this context, I am happy to note that a number of youth groups have undertaken some simple forms of community

services. This is a good beginning and should be given further encouragement. However, to do more sophisticated type of social service such as drug counselling would require professional training of some sort. This is one of the many areas where I think the Central Youth Council and the Regional Youth Councils can come in.

Your responsibilities are heavy and many. I commend your decision to come forward to serve for voluntary work needs dedication, sustained interest and also means a lot personal sacrifice. And I understand that all of you serve in more than one capacity and some of you serve in several capacities. There is no monetary or other material reward. Let us hope that you are rewarded in the long run with a strong PA Youth Movement capable of making greater contribution to youth development in Singapore.

Thank you.