

Speech by Mr Ho Cheng Choon, Parliamentary Secretary  
(National Development) on the occasion of the celebration  
of the 25th Anniversary of Nanyang Huang Shi Chung Huay  
at No.16, Lorong 35, Geylang, on 23.11.1975 at 7.30 p.m.

I am honoured and pleased to be here today to celebrate with you the 25th Anniversary of the Nanyang Huang Shi Chung Huay.

The Nanyang Huang Shi Chung Huay, as a group bearing the same surname, was one of the many which sprang up at the height of the Chinese migration to Singapore, particularly in the early 20th century. Our migrant fore-fathers came here in search of fortunes. Since most of them were young and single, they had no relatives to rely on when they arrived. The clan associations evolved in the process to provide a source of anchor and identification for these rootless migrants.

Initially, the clans acted as guardians of the interests and welfare of the migrants. They also took on the role of peacemakers, settling disputes among members. Gradually, clans began to assume a more social welfare orientated role. They provided financial aid for education and business. Members were assured of funds for religious ceremonies and funeral services in the event of deaths. Clan premises served as recreational and meeting grounds where, among other things, members gathered to talk on things of common interests.

The clan associations should now diversify and expand their role to cater for all groups irrespective of race and creed. We are a multi-racial community and such an approach would engender mutual confidence, trust and respect among the people who have made Singapore their permanent home. It would also bring about greater social cohesion which is one of the basic ingredients required for nationhood.

Singapore today is totally different from what it was in the last century or at the beginning of the present century when it was still a colony. Times have indeed changed and we all have to change our old values and attitudes accordingly so as not to be anachronistic. Since 1965, we have attained our independence and sovereignty. We now have a nation comprising people of various ethnic stocks and religions, and it is imperative that we all strive for nation building to establish a common national identity. This would not be possible if sectional or parochial interests continue to prevail as in the bygone days.

Most of us are local born and unlike our forefathers, have a permanent stake in this country. Our main considerations must of necessity be the interests of Singapore as a whole. Ethnic, linguistic and cultural bonds should not have higher priority than national interests which are paramount. I believe that all clans will benefit immensely if they collectively rid themselves of "my kin group" mentality which is introverted and self-centred, and work toward a wider horizon for the betterment of the community at large.

There are many ways to achieve this goal. One that I have in mind is for clan associations to set up community welfare funds to help the aged, the disabled, and the poor of all creeds and races. I am sure these associations would have no difficulty to measure up to the task. They have the manpower and resources to do it. They should also take an active part in other worthwhile community projects which would benefit all sections of the population.

I have observed over the years that clan associations have set up scholarship funds, from time<sup>to</sup>/time, primarily to provide financial assistance to needy students of their own kinsmen. Here again, the associations can do the country a greater service if they also extend the scope to cater for the whole community and not just for a particular sectional group. Needless to say, this outward and more pragmatic attitude is more in keeping with our task in nation building which requires the effort of each and everyone in the country.

I wish you a happy 25th Anniversary.

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