

SPEECH BY MR LIM GUAN HOO, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(HOME AFFAIRS) AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE "OUR
PEOPLE" AT EXHIBITION HELD BY MINISTRY OF CULTURE
ON THURSDAY, 16 DEC 76 AT 5.20 PM AT THE VICTORIA
MEMORIAL HALL

There has been a constant increase in the number of TV/radio licences issued over the past few years. In 1971, a total of 179,178 licences were issued. This has increased to 296,980 for 1976 as at 31.7.76.

Concurrent with this increase, there is, on the other hand, a wider circulation of newspapers in Singapore today. In 1971, a total of 118,976,203 copies were in circulation i.e. 330,489 copies per day. Within a brief span of five years, this has increased nearly two-fold to 593,349 copies per day as at August 1976 - an average of every 4-member family to 1 copy.

These upward trends are indicative of a higher cultural and educational level of our society, apart from the increasing affluence. This is as it ought to be. For a society without natural resources may not necessarily be doubly penalised by the lack of cultural assets. And spurred with a comprehensive coverage of education service which gives no room for illiteracy, cultural development in our young Republic is bound to be blessed with a solid base.

I do not believe in the pessimistic description of Singapore as a cultural desert. Situated at the meeting point of the East and West and baptised with a variety of cultural resources, Singapore can only be a hotbed for cultural development. In keeping with the socio-economic progress, a higher degree of sophistication and more refinements will naturally be introduced to our literature, our drama and music performances as well as the fine arts, etc. Cultural development is sometimes a reflection of parallel advances in other fields of services. Progress in other fields will also be reflected, either directly or indirectly, in cultural development. The latter may at times take the form of latent advancement, but almost as a matter of course, it seldom fails to catch up to the former.

One way of accelerating such development and strengthening the tendency is to encourage our artists to start their cultural

career early, although it is understandable that many of them will take literature, music or the fine arts as their life-long companions or even their second lives.

Government's direct participation in the promotion of cultural activities, be they in the form of art exhibition or publication of books, or otherwise, means a lot to our artists and writers. The "Art for Everyone" exhibition series organised by the Ministry of Culture and started in May 1971 has been a successful conglomeration of talents and wisdom. A total of 1,600 paintings by 285 artists have been put up for exhibition. This is indeed a good harvest.

Today's exhibition under the theme of "Our People" is yet another example of the constant efforts by the Ministry of Culture to promote cultural activities in our Republic.

For those who take cultural work as their careers, constant efforts, sustained interest and total engrossment in their works are the key to success.

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