

Singapore Government**PRESS RELEASE**

Information Division, Ministry of Communications & Information, City Hall, Singapore 0617 • Tel. 3307269 / 3307270 / 3307271

Release No.: 72/NOV
02-3/85/11/22

SPEECH BY DR WAN SOON BEE, MINISTER OF STATE
(PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE), AT THE SINGAPORE AIRPORT TERMINAL
SERVICES WORKERS' UNION'S SCHOLARSHIP PRESENTATION
AT SATS AUDITORIUM, SATS BUILDING, 55 AIRPORT BOULEVARD
CHANGI AIRPORT ON FRIDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 1985 AT 10.30 AM

I am honoured to be invited here this morning to officiate the first scholarship presentation of Singapore Airport Terminal Services Workers' Union (SATSWU). There will be a total of 60 recipients. The amount to be awarded amongst these recipients comes to a total of \$7,400.

Singapore's economy, as we all know is now being confronted by the worst recession since independence. Our workers who have been receiving good salary increases every year for the last few years have become aware of the harsh reality of our economic downturn. Many have been affected by various belt-tightening efforts from the worst of being retrenched to wage restraint.

However, despite such hardship, we must not be overwhelmed by despair. On the contrary, this is the time to show the world that we belong to a nation which can take adverse situation in stride and turn adversity to our advantage.

Our economy is not doing well for two basic reasons, one is the continued sluggishness of the world economy as a whole, and the other is the strong competition our exports face in international market places.

As a small country like Singapore, our economy can do little about the sluggish world economy. We can only hope that economies of the developed countries can quickly get out of the current doldrum.

But what the Singaporeans can do is to work hard to bring back some of the lost advantage to our exports. Besides wage moderation which employees have already responded positively, we must exert our utmost to increase productivity.

When we talk about improving productivity we must include both the qualitative as well as the quantitative aspects. Quantum increase must couple with quality improvement if our products and services are to remain competitive in the international markets.

Training has been identified as a crucial factor in our effort to improve productivity. In this regard, training must be viewed as a continuing process. In this age of unprecedented technological innovations, today's latest can become obsolete tomorrow. This fast turnover of knowledge and production know-how means that our workforce must be highly adjustable both in skills and knowledge. The days when a worker can repeat the same production process for years on end are no longer with us. Instead training and retraining in practically all work places must be accepted by management and workers alike as an indispensable part in the effort to achieve higher productivity and to keep the competitive edge of our exports.

It is fortunate that the Singapore workforce has been better and better educated, thanks to the importance placed on education by the people and the Government. To invest in the development of our human resources must be considered the best way to ensure our continuous progress and success.

Therefore, viewed in the context of Singapore, efforts by various unions to award scholarships and bursaries to deserving children of members go beyond the simple definition of providing yet another union benefit. Scholarships and bursaries are indeed part of the total effort to ensure an ever better future for our people.

While I congratulate all the recipients here today for their excellent performance in schools and colleges, I also like to remind them that the scholarships they are going to receive are made possible by members of the Union who belong to the rank-and-file of the Singapore workforce. They must treasure and be grateful of the opportunities given to them to further their education. They should work doubly hard in order not to disappoint all those who have pinned so much hope on them.

Last but not least, my heartiest congratulations to SATSWU for making this occasion possible.

oooooooooooooooooooo