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**SPEECH BY MR LEE YOCK SUAN,
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION,
AT THE SINGAPORE BADMINTON ASSOCIATION
(SBA) ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
AT THE SBA CLUBHOUSE
ON SATURDAY, 22 JUNE 1996 AT 2.30 PM**

Welcome to the 60th Annual General Meeting of the Singapore Badminton Association (SBA).

You should have received the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 1996. I shall highlight a few developments.

Our top priority remains that of spotting and attracting young talented players to train and build up our national squads. We have the development pyramid fully in place, from the Primary School Development Programme to the Special Squad for full-time players.

We have appointed a Director of Coaching who is tasked to formulate, implement, monitor and assess training programmes for all levels of development.

I am glad to note that the number of players willing to play full-time has increased from two to five. The SBA will be identifying a few more players to train full-time and providing them with all the necessary support.

In the international scene, we are encouraged by our players' performances. Zarinah Abdullah has qualified for the 1996 Olympic Games and will be playing for us in Atlanta soon.

The year under review also saw a number of players reaching the semi-final stage of international tournaments - the Brunei Open, the New Zealand Open and the Sydney Grand Prix. Though these events may be relatively less competitive, these are still achievements.

We deployed coaches to 16 schools under the newly launched SPEX Coaches Assistance Programme for Schools, which is similar to the School-Based Development Programme which we introduced in 1991.

Our officials are still involving themselves actively in the international scene. One umpire was upgraded to be an International Badminton Federation (IBF) certificated umpire and two umpires were accredited by the Asia Badminton Confederation (ABC).

Our involvement in international activities includes the successful hosting of the six-star Konica Cup and the World Grand Prix finals.

In concluding I wish to thank the Singapore National Olympic Council, the Singapore Sports Council, our sponsors and supporters, our badminton players, coaches and officials for their contributions to badminton in Singapore.

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