

Singapore Government

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SPEECH BY MR HON SUI SEN, MINISTER FOR FINANCE,
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF PORTSDOWN CLUBHOUSE
OF THE SINGAPORE CIVIL SERVICE SPORTS COUNCIL,
ON FRIDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER 1980 AT 5.30 PM

I am very happy to be here for the official opening of the Singapore Civil Service Sports Council Portstown Clubhouse. I am glad to learn that all the Clubhouse facilities are open to those in Government Service or in statutory bodies, as well as their families. The renovated Clubhouse will no doubt serve as the rallying point for the Council's sports, social and recreational activities, which have steadily grown since the establishment of the Council in October 1971.

There is need for rest and recreation for members in the public service. The pressures upon them have increased tremendously with Singapore's rapid economic growth and the Government's greater involvement in the economy. A now more educated people become very vocal when they consider Government action or regulations irksome or when they are denied Government benefits they think due to them. Regretfully also, there is a tendency for some back-bencher MPs, when short of better ideas, to take a general swipe at the civil service, since this always seems to go down well with their public. The civil service, by tradition, is unable to respond, and in any case, cannot do so to other than specific charges. In Japan, I believe that considerate employers sometimes provide rooms where frustrated employees can retire and vent their frustrations. This they do by knocking the stuffing out of effigies representing the employers, the factory manager or whoever has been causing the frustration. In Singapore, we have not yet come to providing such

frustration rooms - instead, the Clubhouse will have to serve, and civil servants must take what satisfaction they can out of knocking or kicking tennis or soccer balls.

The Government as a good employer is therefore happy to encourage the use of the Clubhouse facilities. It also hopes that, as a bonus, the efficiency and productivity of civil servants can be enhanced through participation in healthy sports, social, cultural and recreational programmes. This thinking is reflected in the aims and objectives of the Singapore Civil Service Sports Council. It is gratifying to note that the Council, with some financial assistance from the Government, now offers sports and recreational facilities in three clubhouses at Dempsey Road, Tessensohn Road and Ports-down Road. It also organises the Inter-Public Services Games between Singapore and Malaysian civil servants, and the inter-Ministry sports tournaments, as well as social and recreational programmes throughout the year. The Government will continue to give every assistance to the Council to ensure its success.

The Government also expects that the Council's activities will help fulfil a national objective. "Sports-for-all" is a target which should also be pursued in the civil service. As Singapore modernises and prospers, much greater effort will have to be made to instil sports consciousness and the love for physical exercise because changing values and attitudes towards leisure pose a real threat to health. Life in an urban environment tends to make one soft. Many of us, especially in the civil service, are engaged in work which requires little muscular effort. To get to work and back, we take a car or some other convenient means of transport. At home, we sit back at the dinner table, in an easy chair with the papers, and then in front of the television set. This is typical in industrial and urban societies throughout the world, where there is a tendency among adults and in some cases, even youths, to neglect physical fitness.

It is, therefore, quite obvious that there must be a conscious and sustained programme to promote sports and physical activities amongst workers. The work of the Singapore

Civil Service Sports Council is important as it has established a well coordinated and sustained programme for sports and recreation amongst employees in the Government service and statutory bodies.

The opening of Portsdown Clubhouse will undoubtedly give a fillip to the Council's effort in providing opportunities to public servants and their families for wholesome and rewarding sports and recreation. I wish the Council all the best in its work. I now have great pleasure in declaring this Clubhouse open.

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