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SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

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SPEECH BY THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, MR. CHAN CHEE SEIB, AT THE OPENING OF JUNIOR SAFETY FIRST COUNCIL ON AUGUST 14, 1965 AT 10 A.M. AT VICTORIA MEMORIAL HALL.

Ten years have passed since the Junior Safety First Council was established with the aim of promoting safety first consciousness in all aspects among school children in Singapore. Membership of this Council is confined to student representatives from secondary schools in Singapore with two advisory members from the Ministry of Education and the Singapore Police Force. From its inception it has been very active in its work in promoting discussion, debates, traffic games, oratorical contests, quizzes and exhibitions; it has even recently put up a news-letter entitled the Altruist.

The work of the Council throughout these years is an outstanding example of what the youth in Singapore are capable of doing if given the right encouragement, responsibility and opportunity. Today, we are gathered here to witness another major undertaking by the Council, namely the opening of the 1965 International Safety First Exhibition.

The aim of this exhibition is to show the public many aspects of safety on the road, in the home, in the office, in the factory and other work places and to give an idea of what is being done both locally and abroad for the prevention of accidents and the safety of human lives. About forty foreign and ten local organisations including companies, Government departments, insurance agencies and voluntary societies are participating in this exhibition.

The growing concern of people about road safety has been occasioned by the phenomenal rise in the accident and death rates on the roads. In this modern world today, rapid communication is imperative and the vehicle is no longer considered as an item of luxury but a daily necessity in modern life. Each year more and more vehicles roll off the assembly lines to join the roads which in most cases have not been built to cope with the increasing volume of traffic. In the affluent societies of Western Europe and America more people are being killed on the roads today than have died on the battle fields of the First World War, and on public holidays the major news item is invariably concerned with the accident and death rates on the roads. Whether we like it or not, we will have to live with the growing menace of the motor vehicle.

Our roads are already congested during the rush hours. It is not possible to broaden most of our existing roads in the built-up areas. It takes much time and money to build special highways which do not necessarily solve all our traffic problems. With the increasing prosperity of the State which I envisage will be stepped-up now that we have become an independent and sovereign nation and are no longer hamstrung by a slow-moving Central Government, I am sure that there will be a larger stream of motor vehicles joining our already congested roads in the years to come. Our problems of keeping accidents and deaths off the roads will therefore become more and more acute, and it is gratifying to note that we in Singapore are already aware of the need to promote safety consciousness even among our School children.

While we should concern ourselves with making our roads safer by educating the motorist to exercise care and caution in driving and to ensure that his vehicle is kept in sound mechanical condition at all times, we should also teach our pedestrians, cyclists and others who share the use of the road with the motorist to play their part in keeping accidents on the road down to the minimum. I am glad that the Junior Safety First Council is looking into all aspects of road safety and I hope that their efforts will not have been in vain. Keeping our roads safe is not only good from the humanitarian point of view but will also indirectly help to promote tourism in the State for tourists will be reluctant to come to a place where there is great risk of losing limb or life. In a way, by its activities the Junior Safety First Council is contributing towards the economy of the State.

Although the major concern of people when they talk about safety first is about safety first on the roads, I am pleased to note that the Junior Safety First Council has included in this exhibition aspects of safety in other areas. In this technological age we cannot help escape being surrounded by mechanical and electronic devices which can be dangerous to our lives if we do not know how to use them properly or take safety precautions. While Government introduces legislation and carries out periodic inspections to ensure that our factories are safe for the workers, other agencies and associations can help to make our offices and homes safer as well and I am proud that the Junior Safety First Council has risen to meet this responsibility.

I congratulate the Singapore Junior Safety First Council for organising this International Safety First Exhibition and trust that all who come to view it will learn much from the numerous exhibits on display. I have now great pleasure in declaring the exhibition open.

AUGUST 14, 1965.

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