

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

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ADDRESS BY MR. A. RAHIM ISHAK, MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND PRESIDENT OF THE SINGAPORE AMATEUR ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SINGAPORE AMATEUR ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, ON THURSDAY, 13TH JULY 1972 AT 5.30 P.M. AT SPORTS HOUSE, RUTLAND ROAD.

The year 1971 had its ups and downs. We launched the age-group scheme for the Five-Star Award which is aimed at encouraging school children to take a more serious interest in track and field participation. We also launched the second Four-Year Plan targeted towards the Asian Games in 1974. Presently, there are 94 top athletes in the national squad under the supervision of 14 coaches.

At the 6th SEAP Games in Kuala Lumpur we were not outstanding but taking into account the young age of the team, the individual efforts showed an all-round improvement.

Notable successes last year were P.C. Suppiah who won a total of four international Golds in the 10,000m and 5,000m. He also achieved a national record in the 10,000m. For his fine efforts, Suppiah was adjudged the Sportsman of the Year 1971, thus bringing much credit to his association and to his coach Maurice Nicholas. We gained further international success when Nor Azahar Hamid and Yeo Kian Chye were selected for training in Germany under the auspices of the West German Track and Field Federation. Our young women also had notable achievements. Mirnigar Begum was the first to break the five minute barrier in the 1,500m followed by Lee Tai Jong. There are several other young school-girls of merit upon whom we pin our hopes for the future.

On the debit side we have lost C. Kunalan who has retired after the last Asian Games and Mr. Tan Eng Yoon who retired from athletics after serving as National Coach for many years. To these two gentlemen, I would like to acknowledge our deep appreciation and gratitude for their dedicated services to athletics and personally regret sadly that they have chosen to retire.

In the promotion of athletics we had a full programme of national and international competitions. These had drained our resources to a desperate low point and if it had not been for the hard work of coaches and committee members in organising fund-raising film shows and donations, the deficit would have been greater. I am grateful to those

coaches and committee members who have pulled their weight together.

The National Sports Promotion Board has given us very good support last year, especially in the Festa Sukan Open International Meeting. We hosted 10 countries and it was a successful meeting. The large cost of hosting the meeting was borne by the National Sports Promotion Board. We have been assured of their continued support so long as our organisation maintains the high standard of promotion in athletics.

Singapore has been given the honour of hosting the 7th SEAP Games in 1973. We in track and field athletics will have to work very hard to show that we can organise a large and important meeting. In addition we will have to work doubly hard at improving our chances of winning as many events as is possible. We will also show our guest participants the highest standard of sportsmanship and cordiality befitting of Singapore. This attitude has to prevail throughout our efforts and I am glad to report that indeed we have begun to prepare for 1973.

It is my earnest wish that all of us will continue to make the sacrifices of time and leisure to raise the standards among our athletics and officials so that we may fully achieve our aspirations of greater success in the tasks ahead.

Before I call the meeting to attend to the Agenda for today, may I express my deep appreciation to the outgoing Management Committee of 1971 for their devotion and fine efforts to maintain the quality and dignity of our sport. It is now my pleasure to call the meeting to order and to attend to the matters in the Agenda before us.

Date: 13th July, 1972.