

28/72
6/12/72

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Acc. No. NARC

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SPEECH BY AUGUSTINE H.H. TAN, POLITICAL SECRETARY, PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AT THE UNITED NATIONS DAY INTER-YOUTH QUIZ ORGANIZED BY THE YMCA YOUNG ADULTS' GROUP AT THE YMCA AUDITORIUM, ORCHARD ROAD ON TUESDAY, 24 OCTOBER 1972 AT 7.30 P.M.

YOUTH AND THE CHALLENGE OF EXCELLENCE

I am pleased to be able to attend this quiz on the United Nations this evening. The Young Adults Group of the YMCA ought to be congratulated for taking the initiative and the trouble to organize this event to celebrate United Nations' Day.

In his recent address to Parliament, Dr. Sheares, President of our Republic, stressed the need for Singaporeans to strive for excellence.

In competitions such as this quiz, we joust with one another in a friendly manner for sport. But, the practice it gives us in standing up to challenges, is important too. For, ultimately, the real contest, the challenge for survival and for a place in the sun, is with the outside world. To meet this challenge successfully, young Singaporeans must set high standards of performance for themselves.

As we move on to middle and higher technology in our industries, in our quest for higher standards of living, we need to be better equipped in skills and knowledge and to have keener senses. Instead of getting high on drugs, let us get high on hard work. Instead of the temporary exhilaration of a narcotic, let us look for the sense of fulfillment that comes from achievement, from having done one's best.

We live in a fiercely competitive world. It is also a rapidly changing world. Singaporeans, especially young Singaporeans, must keep abreast of shifting trends in world events, because the fortunes of our Republic may be affected.

Singapore has to be outward-looking in order to prosper. Our youth, therefore, cannot afford to be insular. At the same time, however, they must learn to be discriminating in choosing for adoption, the institutions, ideas and values from abroad.

The process of nation-building is a slow one. For a small country like ours, with so much diversity, it can be very difficult. Indeed, our youthfulness as a nation manifests itself at critical junctions. In the recent General Elections, for example, opposition parties openly questioned our independence as a nation and the right to defend ourselves. Clearly, we have yet to learn how to exercise our democratic rights without bringing down the house in the process. Perhaps our youth can help establish the tradition whereby democratic freedoms can be enjoyed with the necessary responsibility and restraint.

May I leave you with this thought and wish you all a pleasant evening?

Date: 24 October 1972

Time Issued: 1400 hours