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9/10/74

SPEECH BY MR A RAHIM ISHAK, MINISTER OF STATE FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND PRESIDENT, SINGAPORE AMATEUR
ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE S. A. A. ON FRIDAY, 29 MARCH 1974 AT 5.30 P.M.
AT SPORTS HOUSE, RUTLAND ROAD, SINGAPORE 8

As we are gathered here today to elect the office bearers for another year, it is right that at this juncture we look back at the past, take stock especially of our shortcomings and appraise ourselves for the future.

1973 proved to be yet another successful year for the Association. A total of 24 national records were either equalled or broken - 13 by the women athletes and all by the men. This was indeed a high achievement and I wish to congratulate the coaches and athletes for their fine efforts. Their hard work has also paid off as we have won 2 of the 3 coveted Singapore National Olympic Council awards for 1973. My congratulations go to Mr Patrick Zehnder who has received the "Coach of the Year" award, to Mr Nor Azhar Hamid who was chosen "Sportsman of the Year" and to Mrs Heather Mexican and Miss Chee Swee Lee for receiving Meritorious Awards. This is indeed a reassuring gesture of our place in the field of sports in our republic.

While we can be proud of our achievements, let us not, however, rest on our past laurels. Instead, our successes should provide the stimulus for even greater achievements by our athletes. While we have done well at international meets like the SEAP Games, our performance at bigger international meets has not been too good. It is true that we do not have all the resources or the facilities like other countries whose performance at these meets has been creditable, nor am I saying that we should be obsessed with winning gold medals all the time. Sports in our republic is young and it will take time before we can produce a large number of talented athletes.

However, we should try harder with the facilities already at our disposal. Besides the Farrer Park Athletic Centre, Toa Payoh Sports Complex, Queenstown Sports Complex and the Kallang People's Association track, we have a final National Stadium which can be used by our athletes for training. Already there have been criticisms of the Stadium being a "White Elephant". This may be true in regard to the high

cost of hiring it for meets and matches. However, the use of the Stadium for training purposes would not only deflect criticism but also ensure that optimum use is made of the Stadium, built at great cost and here we must thank the Singapore Sports Council for always allowing our state athletes free use of its facilities for training.

We have also to pay greater attention to developing athletics in our schools. Pupils who have shown promise in athletics should be selected for more intensive training. In this way, talented athletes can be given the best opportunities to develop themselves while they are still very young and at the formative stage in their lives. We can then look forward to seeing athletes who can hold their own against the best, if not internationally, at least in Asia.

All sports in the republic need similar encouragement and support. In a country like Singapore where human resources are our only natural resource, it is essential that we have a robust and healthy population. Sound minds can only function in healthy bodies.

Sports have been given quite an uplift recently with the establishment of the Singapore Sports Council. We must work together with them to spread athletics throughout our republic. In this way, we can not only promote athletics as a healthy sport but we will also have a broader base from which to select our champions. Our policy remains one of maximum possible participation in athletics by all Singaporeans interested in this sport.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the SNOC, SSC, donors, employers, parents and our affiliated clubs for the fine support they have given us last year and we will be looking forward for their support again this year. Also, I wish to say thank you to Lt. Col. Kesavan Soon for his valuable contribution while he has been with us in the Management Committee. We hope that when he is not pressured with work he would consider returning to our fold.

DATED: MARCH 29, 1974.

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