

# SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE

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Acc. No.      NARC      SPEECH BY DR AHMAD MATTAR, AG MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS,  
78 0060 48      AT THE RECEPTION FOR PARTICIPANTS OF THE SHIP FOR SOUTH-  
EAST ASIAN YOUTH PROGRAMME, 1978 ON MONDAY, 23 OCT 78  
AT 1930 HOURS AT THE ISTANA

First of all, let me welcome all the participants from the other ASEAN countries and from the host country, Japan. We are glad to have you with us in Singapore and we hope that you will find our country and our people interesting enough for you to carry back warm memories of our friendship.

The Ship for South-East Asian Youth Programme was launched in 1974 and this is the fifth year of its operation. Altogether, 930 young men and women have been brought together to participate in the programme. A considerable amount of money and effort have been invested into this project by Japan. To a lesser extent, the participating countries have also spent money and effort to ensure the success of the programme. Now that the programme has completed its first cycle, it is perhaps time for us to take stock and ask ourselves whether it has all been worthwhile.

The participants fall into the age group of eighteen to thirty years. This is a fairly wide range in age. They have come from diverse walks of life and have different aspirations and interests. Except perhaps for the fact that they share the same interest in youth activities, there can be nothing much in common amongst them. After the trip, each will go back to his respective home town, cherishing fond memories of an enjoyable trip. All of them would have gained a good insight into the way of life and developed a better understanding of the young people in the other countries. However, there is no measurable benefit from such an experience.

There is no doubt that bringing together a selected group from the five ASEAN countries and Japan on a ship for two months would build up lasting personal friendships. The important thing would be to select the participants so that they would be able to harness the personal friendships

built up for the benefit of their respective countries.

Perhaps, the next cycle for the Ship for South-East Asian Youth Programme should be more specific in the type of participants for the programme. For example, it would be extremely useful to bring together potential young leaders of each participating country. There is a great need for young leaders both in industry, civil service and in politics to get together with their counterparts from the other ASEAN countries as well as Japan. The potential leaders will have an opportunity to stay together and share experiences with each other for about two months and this will be an invaluable pool of friends in their consequent dealings with each other.

There is an urgent need for leaders of various fields in neighbouring countries to understand each other and to appreciate the hopes and aspirations of one another. There is an urgent need for the young leaders of each country to know each other personally so that difficulties in both trade, commerce and political affairs could be better resolved through personal contacts. A programme such as the Ship for South-East Asian Youth Programme could be planned to cater for a very select group of individuals who may determine the destiny of their respective countries.

Most of you who are here this evening are the leaders in various youth activities in your country. In the course of your tour, you will have learnt from each other and acquired valuable experience. It will be a pity if all that you can say at the end of the trip is that "I have enjoyed myself". You should be able to bring back your experiences to share with your respective youth movements.

In the next few days, you will have an opportunity to visit various places in Singapore as well as to meet people in their homes and in their working places. The home visits that have been planned for you will give you an opportunity to see how we Singaporeans live and play. I hope that you will cherish these memories when you go home and perhaps one day when you need the assistance of some friends in the other participating countries, you can reach out to them and they will be there.

May I wish all participants a pleasant journey on the next part of the programme.

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