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SPEECH BY MR LEE KHOON CHOY, ACTING MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION AT THE RECEPTION FOR
THE SOUTH EAST ASIAN YOUTH SHIP PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS
AT THE ISTANA ON FRIDAY, 21 OCTOBER 1977

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I wish first of all to welcome all of you to Singapore on behalf of the Government and the people. This is the fourth time this Ship of Friendship and Co-operation for South East Asian Youth has cruised into our harbour. The fact that this Youth Ship Programme started in 1972 has entered its fourth year shows that the scheme has been found to be useful. My feeling is that the cruise has become an event which the youths of the six participating countries are looking forward to each year. This is naturally so because to you the lucky 180 who have been chosen to participate, this 2-month cruise offers you an opportunity to go through the baptism of experience. You meet new friends, see new places, exchange views and have fun with people of your same age group coming from six different countries with different social and cultural backgrounds.

When 180 young hearts meet, something is bound to happen. More so when both sexes have equal representation and confined to a luxury liner for two months. As this will be your first experience, some may get sea-sick when crossing the turbulent China Sea and some home-sick when the ship drifts further away from home. A number may even become love sick as I was told that a number of participants in the past actually got bitten by the love bug. A few couples landed in matrimonial bliss which knew no national boundaries nor racial barriers. These are the only hazards you need to worry about for the Ship's doctors have no cure for such sicknesses.

I am sure this Ship is not meant for matrimonial seekers, nor for tender hearts who easily get sea-sick or home-sick. The journey however does play a role of match making not so much in the matrimonial sense but in bringing about the meeting of minds of

promising youths from Japan and the five ASEAN countries. This is perhaps one of the tangible and yet intangible products of the Japan-ASEAN dialogue. Tangible in the sense that through daily contact and cross fertilization of ideas, the younger generation will get a better understanding and appreciation of one another's mode of behaviour, code of conduct and the areas of sensitivities. You also share your hopes, aspirations and problems. Intangible because the results of such contacts may not be visible for some length of time. The friendship and understanding cultivated in the spring of life, may become a valuable asset and useful experience in later years when delicate national problems affecting the various countries concerned need to be tackled. The more such friendship and understanding is cemented on a people-to-people level among nations, the better will be the chance of peace, harmony and co-operation in the family of nations.

For all participants, this is a lifetime opportunity to meet so many friends from so many countries at one time and at one place. It is therefore only appropriate that you make good use of it. The Ship can act as a clearing house for ideas and faulty myths about one another. It can also serve as a melting pot for an interchange of cultural values and appreciation of folk art, songs and dances. The Japanese participants for instance will have a closer look at the national characteristics, particularly the cultural sensitivities of their counterparts from ASEAN. Perhaps ASEAN participants would like also to know the secret of Japan's success in acquiring the impetus and expertise to forge ahead with Western technological advancement and yet able to retain her oriental wisdom and cultural values.

I am sure all of you can learn a lot from one another. One thing which should come out of the whole exercise is how to get along with one another as good neighbours.

Today we are still living in a world of myths. The advance of science and technology has succeeded in putting man in the moon and now reaching for the stars. But we still lag behind miserably on what appears to be simple matters of how to live in peace and harmony with our fellow human beings next door. Man has succeeded in taming nature but has failed to find solutions to problems of human relations. Nations still resort to violent confrontation when they cannot resolve their differences. The differences are often

caused by misconception and prejudices resulting from ignorance and lack of contact.

If at the end of it all, the Youth Ship can help to clear some of the myths or misconception you may have had about your fellow participants and the countries they represent and bring you nearer to the truth and reality of things, it will have served its purpose. There is nothing more convincing in life than real experience gained through personal contact in our constant search for reality and truth. It is in this spirit that I wish the Youth Ship Programme the best of success.

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