

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING
OF THE NATIONAL STADIUM - SATURDAY 21 JULY 1973

In formally opening this stadium, let me say what we hope to achieve. We have invested nearly \$30 million for the building, and over \$20 million for the land, car parks and ancillary facilities. This \$50 million will not produce any profits. In fact, we shall be lucky to get enough receipts to pay for the annual administrative and maintenance costs. In other words, we are putatively losing over \$5 million a year, a 10% return on \$50 million per annum, and several millions more for annual depreciation.

However, as a social investment, fully and properly used, it can be made a great asset. Given leadership by the Chairman, Dr. B.K. Sen, people will be encouraged to watch, and then to personally take part in sporting activities.

Healthy, wholesome exercise and recreation can make up for the passive entertainment which filled the lives of many people, the TV, cinemas, floorshows and exhibitions.

With a population of just over 2 million, let us not waste time going especially out of our way to produce gold medallists, whether for Olympic, Asian or SEAP games. There are no national benefits from gold medallists for smaller

countries. For the super powers, with large populations, superiority in sports is national propaganda to persuade other people of the superiority of their competing political systems. But it is foolish and wasteful for the smaller countries to do this.

However, from time to time, we shall throw up a few natural record-breakers. But any Olympic sports council member, or an affiliate club, which sets out to persuade above-average sportsmen or sportswomen to devote the best years of their lives merely to training and becoming gold medalists, will find their zeal misplaced, and funds cut off. For they will do an injustice to these persons. First, they are unlikely to achieve world class. Second, what happens to record-breaking aspirants when their prime years are over?

We live an artificial city life. Too many people take the lift, briefly amble to a bus stop, and take another lift to work. Many do not make daily exercise a habit. Sports can help. This stadium should be used to encourage not just watching games, but, after watching, to engage in sports and athletics. Inter-school and inter-university semi-finals and finals for students can be held here. So also inter-constituency sports amongst the younger adults. And we should also encourage inter-constituency veterans' sports. Keeping fit is a life-long exercise. Perhaps watching people keep fit may encourage others to do so.

From time to time, there will be spectacular, world-class, star-studded teams, clashing in this arena. They can show what some human beings can do, if they are born with the physical attributes -- co-ordination of the eye and muscle - - plus intense and professional training. But let us not deceive ourselves that there are any credits for us in our trying to do this. Our best return is to generate healthy, vigorous exercise for the whole population, young and old, enhancing the valuable qualities we have -- a keen, bright, educated people who will lead better and more satisfying lives if they are fit and healthy.

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