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TEXT OF SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR, MR. ONG PANG BOON, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF THE ASIAN YOUTH COUNCIL THIRD ADVANCED YOUTH LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE HELD AT THE AUDITORIUM OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE ON SUNDAY, JULY 3, 1977 AT 5.30 P.M.

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One of the significant facts in Asia is that most of the developing countries have large numbers of youths, often making up more than 50 per cent of their populations. For this reason, any international conference about Asian youth problems is an important event. This Third Advanced Youth Leadership Training Workshop has special significance because the problems will be discussed by those most affected - namely, youth leaders and youth workers.

Your Training Workshop, I have been given to understand, will be devoting the larger part of two weeks to discuss and analyse the various aspects of unemployment, especially that of young men and women. I do not pretend to know the answers, for the problems and, therefore, the solutions for the countries represented here must differ because of different circumstances. Yet, it is not understating the prevailing situation if I say, that the most serious problem facing Asia today is to create sufficient employment for its youths.

Unemployment is a serious problem for all countries, developed and developing. But, in developed countries, the hardships can be temporarily alleviated by unemployment benefits, whereas in developing countries, lacking the wealth for such social welfare, the hardships are harder to bear, and may include abject poverty, human degradation, and even starvation. In developed countries, unemployment is mainly the result of world trade recessions, but in some developing countries, it is a major problem, even when the world economy is booming. Population increases have outstripped

economic growth, ...2/-

economic growth, because of high birth rates, low economic growth rates, or, as is often the case, the combination of both factors. The situation is worse than running on a treadmill. It is made worse when world trade recedes. As if the situation is not bad enough, it is compounded by the so-called revolution of rising expectations, in part the product of the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles, and in part the result of the influence of television and high-pressure advertisements.

We cannot now put the blame of economic ills on the wicked imperialist and colonial powers. A whole new generation has grown up, knowing no other governments than those formed by their own people. The responsibility rests with them, and, therefore, the blame is on them. There is no alibi. Governments have fallen, by the democratic vote or violence, because they have failed to solve the unemployment problems.

It is axiomatic that the aim of all governments is to eradicate unemployment. It will be presumptuous on my part to tell other governments how to solve their problems. They will be judged by their own people, and if they are seen to have failed in the eyes of their people, they must inevitably fall, sooner or later. This is the relentless fact of history.

However, I think it will be helpful to this workshop if I may throw out, for your discussions, some suggestions on how youths can contribute towards promoting economic development.

It is a fact of life that in the world of today, no country can hope to develop unless it accepts the inflow of foreign capital, the transfer of technology and expertise, and economic interdependence. Even communist countries have recognised and accepted this reality. The less developed communist countries accept capital, technology and expertise, from the advanced communist countries, and trade with one another. They do this on a government to government basis, because in communist countries all economic activities are state enterprises. However, more recently, Communist East Europe, including the Soviet Union, have even sought participation of western multinational Corporations to further their development, particularly in such advanced technological industries like computers and automobiles.

In non-communist countries, private enterprise plays crucial roles in bringing about economic development. Today, multi-national corporations are the agency of economic developments. They bring in capital, expertise, as well as technology, without which there can be no significant economic development.

Youths can play important roles in providing the climate for foreign investments. First, they should not display attitudes and indulge in activities that show them to be hostile towards foreign capital, expertise, and technology. Such behavior will inevitably frighten away would-be investors, and discourage those who have invested. In the history of post-war Asia, in those countries where foreign investments have been frightened away by excesses, the outcome has been poverty and unemployment for the majority.

Second, youths must have self-discipline, and be thrifty and hardworking. One of the problems of Asia is that as the result of modern mass communication, especially television, the soft life of affluent advanced countries has an impact on Asia youths' attitude towards work and thrift. Even in advanced countries, especially in welfare states, it is increasingly recognised that the attitude of more pay for less work will eventually ruin their economies. In developing countries, such attitudes will hinder economic development. The good life cannot be had immediately and without hard work. This is the hard fact of life.

Third, youths should play leading roles in family planning, and bring under control the population explosion so prominent in so many Asian countries. Their parents have made life difficult for them by producing too many children, but they can help to make life easier for their children if they do what their parents never did - family planning.

Lastly, youths, especially those who have the necessary education to be the intelligentsia of their countries, can play critical roles in shaping public opinion that will promote the conditions for economic growth. Obviously, the role will be different for those who come from advanced countries in Asia or on the fringe of it. For them, their greatest contribution is to convince their countrymen that in the long run protectionism is not in their interests. For4/-

interests. For those who are in ASEAN, shaping public opinion in favour of greater freedom of trade within the region will be a contribution towards more rapid mutual economic growth and prosperity.

On this note, I like to conclude my address. And without further ado, I declare, with pleasure, open this training workshop, and wish you a fruitful conference.

JULY 3, 1977.
