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TEXT OF SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR AND MP FOR TELOK AYER, MR. ONG PANG BOON, AT THE PRIZE PRESENTATION CEREMONY FOR THE INTRA-ZONE A SEPAK TAKRAW TOURNAMENT 1977 HELD AT THE TELOK AYER COMMUNITY CENTRE ON SATURDAY, NOV.5, 1977 AT 7.30 P.M.

It is a pleasure to be here tonight to officiate at the prize presentation ceremony for the Intra-Zone A Sepak Takraw Tournament 1977. I must congratulate the Telok Ayer Constituency Sports Association for organising this tournament.

Sports and games in modern societies fulfil a number of functions. They provide wholesome activities for leisure and represent a break from the routine and tedium of daily life. They serve to improve the health and physical fitness of those who participate in them. In addition, they develop the character of participants. Values which can be inculcated through sports include sportsmanship, team spirit, discipline and perseverance. In newly emergent developing societies they also have a nation-building function. Sports and games provide opportunities for our young as well as adults from the different races to mix, to understand each other and to work as a team. Where they involve other countries, they also contribute to greater identification with Singapore.

Realising the importance of sports and games, the Government has supported actively the development of this area of social activity. The Government grant to sports was \$62,000 in 1967. For the current financial year, a sum of about \$5.4 million has been allocated. With this support and the affluence of our people as a result of our successful economic development, we have seen in the last decade a great increase in sports and games activities. Sports facilities have increased greatly, sports organisations have mushroomed and the participation rate has gone up markedly.

Sepak takraw is a game played in schools as well as outside. The Singapore Amateur Sepak Takraw Association (SaSta) organises a national2/-

a national competition among sepak takraw associations. In addition, the Sports Council holds an inter-constituency competition on the game. On the regional level, it is a game accepted for the South-east Asian Games and there is an annual game with Malaysia. Recently we have begun to play this game on an Asian basis.

However, although the game is easy to play needing little by way of equipment and other requirements, yet the game is only largely played and enjoyed by the Malay community. Whether it is competition at school, constituency or association level the sepak takraw teams are predominantly Malays. It is only in recent years that there is a slight improvement in non-Malay participation in the game. Our national team now has one non-Malay member. Of the six teams in this Intra-Zone A tournament, one team is wholly Malay, four other teams overwhelmingly Malay and surprisingly one team exclusively non-Malay. Since sports and games have a nation-building role, it is desirable that a game or sport is played by all our communities. We must make more determined efforts to encourage non-Malays to play sepak takraw just as we must have more non-Chinese play basketball. This process should begin in our schools and if done, we will have in the long run non-Malays as well as Malays taking part in sepak takraw.

Finally, let me congratulate the teams which have won the first four places in the Intra-Zone A tournament. The tournament has provided invaluable experience to all six teams and I am sure that they can now go forward with greater confidence to take part in the nation-wide inter-constituency competition to be held in February next year.
