

31 AUG 1984

EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERYSPEECH BY DR TAN ENG LIANG, CHAIRMAN, SINGAPORE SPORTS COUNCIL, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION SEMINAR ON FRIDAY, 24 AUGUST 1984 AT 9.00 AM

Today, this seminar is about Self-Reliance in Sport. It is appropriate that in this year's celebrations of our 25 years of nation-building, we in sport should be addressing ourselves to this theme of self-reliance.

In reviewing the past 25 years, sport has made its impact felt. Constituency sports, national mass participation events, Pesta Sukan, Singapore River Regatta, rhythmic exercise and the introduction of Family Sports Day this month have all been part of the "Sport for All" movement.

In 1971, sports liaison officers were appointed to spark off the organisation of sport and recreational activities at the constituency or grassroots level. Over the years these volunteers have worked with the Singapore Sports Council in various sport promotion programmes. I am glad to note that the support and enthusiasm of these sports leaders have not waned. The recent Family Sports Day was a success, thanks to the co-operation of the People's Association, the Constituency Sports Clubs, the Residents' Committees and many community leaders who formed the Organising Committees for this event.

However, inspite of having provided the wherewithals of sport promotion - volunteers, programmes,

facilities and equipment - sport participation has been minimal in some groups of our population. In a recent SSC sport survey of three housing estates, it was found that

- a there was a downward trend in sport participation among the 25-29 age group; and
- b more than half of the working females interviewed were not active in sports.

These two findings are disturbing. It is of concern to us that our young men and women, purportedly in their prime of life, are neglecting their fitness and health. Equally of concern is the second finding regarding the group of working women who show no interest in sport. Some effort on their part must be made in order to change their negative attitude towards sport. The facilities are available and it is up to them to make the first move ... finding the time to fit in sport in their working life.

The SSC has in the past decade worked towards self-reliance in sport. Much ground has been covered but we still have a long way to go. The broad-based participation sport programmes and the fitness schemes are the cornerstones on which we build towards sport excellence. Self-reliance and excellence in sport are not incompatible and they can develop hand in hand and dovetail towards the apex of the pyramidal model of sport promotion that we subscribe to.

but self-reliance in sport cannot be fully achieved by the SSC alone. There must be a concerted effort by all. We have made a start in this direction. It is up to us now to accelerate our efforts not just towards self-reliance but self-sufficiency in sport as well.

Allow me to share some of my thoughts on what I consider as worthy areas for development towards self-reliance in sport.

First, it will be a step in the right direction for national sports associations to upgrade their coaches' education programme and build up a corps of knowledgeable coaches on whom they can rely and thus relieve the need for partial or total dependence on foreign expertise and personnel. This does not mean that we should completely sever our links with foreign coaches but rather to give the key coaching jobs to local coaches who have the talent, merit, energy and strength of character to raise the standards of their chosen sport.

Second, I believe the time has come for our local tertiary institutions - the University and Polytechnics - to award scholarships to deserving sportsmen and sportswomen along the lines as those given at American universities. We certainly need not have to go overboard on this but a few such scholarships can go a long way to motivate good sportsmen and sportswomen to pursue higher education without having to face financial problems. The Esso University Scholarship Scheme has been an encouraging

start but it should not end there. We can prevent the exodus of talented sportsmen to foreign universities only when we can offer something here that is sufficiently attractive to capture their interest.

Third, similarly to prevent the loss of national sportsmen to neighbouring countries, local employers could favourably consider employing footballers and others in jobs as a first step towards self-reliance. I believe it is utterly demoralising to the National Sports Associations concerned to have players that they cannot call on when it comes to assembling the best national team.

Fourth, harnessing human resources and creating schemes and scholarships are by no means the only things that we can do to achieve self-reliance. An area that Singapore sport can explore and indeed implement is to improvise and build equipment and facilities which can benefit a considerable number of persons. I refer to equipment like fitness apparatuses in which schools, clubs and companies can erect at minimal cost. A start has been made with commendable results. And here I would like to applaud those schools which have on their own steam built fitness stations for use by their pupils. Two NSAs have gathered enough resources to build their own training facilities. I consider these as fine examples of self-reliance in sport.

In closing, I am sure participants have come here ready to share their thoughts on the subject of self-reliance in sport. May I wish you a successful seminar.

I now have pleasure in inviting you to see a multi-media show on the efforts made by the SSC to achieve self-reliance in sport. For those of you who have seen this show, I ask you to bear with us for the next 10 minutes.