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SPEECH BY DR YEO NING HONG, MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE,
AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF MARTIAL ARTS DEMONSTRATION
AT THE GAY WORLD STADIUM ON SATURDAY, 25 JULY '81 AT 8.00 PM

First of all, permit me to thank you for inviting me to officiate at this Closing Ceremony.

I would also like to congratulate the Singapore Martial Arts Instructors' Association for the successful organisation of this martial arts demonstration.

One of the objectives of this demonstration is to promote various types of martial arts as a form of physical exercise. This will keep our citizens physically fit and mentally alert. In olden days, in China, Japan and other Asian countries, the strength of the armies depended to a large extent on the martial skills and physical fitness of their military leaders. Many of you must have read or heard of stories of how a single warrior won battles by taking on scores of enemies in one encounter. Such feats may not be altogether true but the message is clear.

Despite being equipped with the most sophisticated weaponry, the armies of today still depend on the physical fitness of the individual men if they are to constitute creditable fighting forces. The citizen army forms the backbone of Singapore's defence capability, and their physical fitness is therefore of paramount importance. Each year, millions of dollars are spent on keeping our young people fit before entering National Service, during National Service and after leaving the National Service for the reserve service. The widespread practice of martial arts would certainly help toughen up our National Servicemen and reservists.

Whilst we are actively encouraging our young people to participate in martial arts, we should also be on guard against it

from falling /2.

from falling into the hands of unscrupulous characters and anti-social elements. Otherwise, they would abuse their skills to victimise the weak and the defenceless. It is for this reason that the Martial Arts Instruction Act and the Martial Arts Regulations were introduced in 1974. Since then, with proper supervision and regulations, there has been a steady increase in the number of martial arts instructors and participants. In 1974, 22 instructors and 508 students were registered with the Martial Arts Controlling Unit (MACU). In 1980 there were 37 instructors and 846 students. This represents an increase of about 70 per cent for both instructors and students.

Like other worthwhile skills, martial art is not a subject which one can learn and then put aside for use in time of need. The experts tell us that it is an art which you should practise regularly throughout your life if you wish to master it.

Martial arts instructors can help inculcate this positive and serious attitude in their students. Lessons must be well planned and students must be motivated to learn the art and to treasure what they have learned. In other words, martial arts instructors' responsibility goes beyond merely imparting skills; they must develop the character and self discipline of their students as well.

The pugilistic feats you witness in the two nights of demonstration are the result of many years of constant and vigorous practice by the older exponents. If we do not prepare the ground for the training of our younger pugilists, there may come a time when we will not see such excellent performances any-more. It is therefore imperative for our younger pugilists to train hard to ensure high standards of performance. Singaporeans usually succeed whenever they put their hearts and minds to a task. I am sure you will do likewise in your martial arts. Once again, my hearty congratulations to the Singapore Martial Arts Instructors' Association for having successfully organised this demonstration.