

SPEECH BY RADM (NS) LUI TUCK YEW, MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION, AT THE SINGAPORE SCHOOLS SPORTS COUNCIL AND SINGAPORE PRIMARY SCHOOLS SPORTS COUNCIL'S 49TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON THURSDAY, 27 DECEMBER 2007, 3.15 PM AT HWA CHONG INSTITUTION

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Colleagues

Ladies and Gentlemen

1) I am pleased to join you at this Annual General Meeting of the Singapore Schools Sports Councils. I would like to begin by congratulating the Primary and Secondary Schools Sports Councils for yet another year of good work in providing our students with opportunities to participate in the co-curricular activities and, in particular, sports.

DIVERSIFYING LANDSCAPE – ENRICHING EXPERIENCES FOR OUR STUDENTS THROUGH SPORTS

Value of Sports

2) Each year, the two councils plan a myriad of activities for our students from all levels. Our students devote much time in participating in these CCAs and learn skills and values that can last a lifetime. Through sports, our students learn to become more confident, resilient and persevering. Besides this, students also learn to appreciate the diversity amongst them, which in turn helps to foster friendships and camaraderie. Even within a sports team, one will find members who have different abilities which a coach will identify and harness to give the team the best overall chance of winning. The synergistic contribution of the whole team raises the team to a higher level. In short, sports experiences offer wonderful opportunities for teaching the value of diversity and teamwork as students learn through these experiences to complement and support one another.

More Opportunities for Sports Participation

3) Besides being opportune platforms for learning to appreciate diversity, teamwork and other aspects of character development, sports is a gateway for skills development, physical development, and development of a healthy lifestyle. For these reasons, MOE has been working with schools to provide more opportunities for sports participation. MOE and the Schools Sports Councils have been working to include more

sports in the inter-school games competitions. This year, another new sport namely, floorball a nascent sport which has gained many followers has been included in the inter-school competition bringing the total number of sports to 26.

4) Another strategy adopted was to expose students to more sports through the Sports Education Programme (SEP), a collaborative partnership between Singapore Sports Council (SSC) and MOE. SEP has indeed given more students opportunities to participate in a sport in schools. I am pleased that SEP has in particular given those students who are not in their school teams a chance to play new sports which might otherwise have been unavailable to them. To date, the SEP has benefited 152 or 87% of primary schools and 144 or 88% of secondary schools. Based on data from the SSC, close to 150,000 students have benefitted from the workshops, courses and new opportunities available through the SEP.

5) This year, SEP consisted of two components called Sports Play and Sports Exposure aimed respectively at providing students with opportunities to learn sports skills that we hope will lead to a lifelong interest in sports, and events and programmes to engage the general student population in sports. SEP will now offer a third category called Sports Development which comprise structured, regular instructional courses at a more advanced level to further develop students' competencies in a sports skill. Also to be included next year is the Sports League which comprises intra-school competitions that will allow greater student participation as teams within a school have the opportunity to compete against each other in their chosen sporting activity.

6) With the creation of the new categories within SEP, we now have more recreational and developmental opportunities for our students. It is hoped that in time to come, the Sports League will garner much participation, catering to more students who are interested to participate in sports and complementing the existing system where schools select, train and send their best athletes to the National Inter-school competitions.

Developing Sports Talents

Existing Opportunities

7) Besides working to provide more opportunities for all children to participate in sports, MOE is also developing sports talents in our students. This is done through our national schools competition system which provides a developmental pathway for our top talents. Those who excel at the National Inter-school level are selected into the Singapore Schools teams to participate in the ASEAN and Asian schools competitions. This year, at the 7th ASEAN Schools Swimming Championships in Bangkok, our boys were champions while the girls came in 2nd. Our Singapore Schools team also took part in the 10th Asian Schools Tenpin Bowling Championships in Hong Kong and did well to win one silver and one bronze. The Singapore Schools Netball Girls team came in 2nd in the 3rd Asean Schools Netball Championship, which we hosted. Singapore also hosted the 3rd Asian Schools Boys Volleyball Championship.

8) Participation in sports at the ASEAN and Asian levels often encourages and motivates our students to aspire to represent Singapore in competitions at an even higher level. I am proud to announce that at the recent SEA Games, 43 out of the 126 medallists are under-19. These young athletes comprise our present students in our schools,

polytechnics, ITE and universities. Some are first timers to the games. Representing Singapore is the pinnacle that comes only through much hard work and perseverance that complements natural talent and ability and I congratulate all those selected to Team Singapore.

Talent Development Framework for Sports

9) I am pleased to announce that MOE will be building on our current efforts in sports talent development among students by implementing a new Talent Development Framework from 2008. The Framework is aimed at systematically identifying and providing developmental opportunities for our student-athletes.

10) The Talent Development Framework focuses on three key strategies; Development of talented athletes in primary schools through MOE Junior Sports Academies (JSAs), Enhancement of Support for the Singapore Schools Sports Teams (SSST) and Enhancement of resources for schools' talent development efforts.

11) Early identification and development of sports talent is necessary for long term success. Our first strategy is to work with primary schools to identify and develop sporting talent. Within this Framework, athletes who are identified can receive training at centralised sports academies housed mainly in selected schools where resources are collectively harnessed to provide for more systematic training in structured development programmes.

12) Talent identification should adopt an inclusive approach. We will identify two groups of athletes, the first group comprising athletes who are already excelling in their respective sports and the second group are those who may not necessarily play the sport but have the potential to do well in it. A multi-pronged approach based on competition results, scouting, nomination by schools and NAPFA Test results will be used to identify the athletes for the selection trials. At the selection trials, the coaches will further identify those suitable for the academies through generic motor skills test like hand-eye coordination, balance and agility etc, sports specific skills test and match play.

13) To date, we have completed the first selection of students for the Wushu and Badminton academies. We will be conducting the selection trials for Netball, Table Tennis, Track and Field and Swimming academies in early 2008.

14) For a start, we will set up at least one Junior Sports Academies per zone in 2008. In the North Zone, academies for netball, swimming, table tennis and track and field will be based at the Singapore Sports School; in the South Zone, an academy for table-tennis will be set up at the Singapore Table Tennis Association; in the East Zone, the academy for Wushu will be set up at Chung Cheng High Main; and finally in the West Zone, a badminton academy will be based at Henry Park Primary School. For the first year, these academies will cater to an estimated 280 athletes who will be in Primary 5 in 2008.

15) In the coming years, we will be setting up more Junior Sports Academies which will cater to a wider range of sports. In time to come, we could see up to a total of 16 academies catering to an estimated 1000 athletes in P5 and 6.

16) Next, we will enhance the support of the Singapore Schools Sports Teams in areas such as coaching, sports sciences and provide students more opportunities to compete and benchmark their standards with those in the region. We will be working with the Singapore Sports Council and NSAs to identify suitable coaches and resources to enhance what we are already providing to the Singapore Schools Sports Teams.

17) Thirdly, we will enhance the resources for talent development and make them available to all schools. To date, we have developed in-house skills tests for Soccer, Badminton and Basketball. We will be developing more of these skills tests as well as other resources such as a computerized software to match the students' physical data and physical potential, abilities and interests to the sports most suitable to them. We also need to strengthen the capacity of external coaches and teachers who are involved in Sports CCAs and CCAB will do so through the Sports Coaches Accreditation Programme.

YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES

18) Singapore's bid to host the inaugural Youth Olympics Games is gaining momentum. We are proud to be short-listed and have done well to be ranked second by the International Olympic Council as a potential host country. We have put in our best effort to convince the International Olympic Council's Bid Evaluation Panel that we have the capability and organisational ability to pull off a successful and historic event. This bid is strongly supported by association, companies and individuals from all walks of life.

19) MOE will play an important role in the Education and Cultural Programme of the Youth Olympic Games. The Education and Cultural Programme which is key component of our bid to host the YOG will consist of four main areas: the Olympic Education Programme which seeks to impart Olympic values, the Twinning Programme and the International camp which aim to provide platforms for cultural exchange, and fostering of friendships, the International Sports Conference which aims to raise awareness on issues of sports development and lastly the youth volunteer programme, which aims to involve youths and encourage them to take ownership of projects that will advance society. More details will be worked out and disseminated to schools in the coming months should we be given the privilege to host the Games.

20) Regardless of the outcome of our bid, we should strive to inculcate the Olympic values of 'Friendship' and 'Respect' in our sportsmen and for them to live out these values within and beyond the sporting arena. The Singapore Schools Sports Council is working with the Singapore National Olympic Council to bring this message to schools and encourage our students to look beyond one-self and do their part for the less fortunate under the ongoing campaign 'Giving is Winning'. In this campaign, our students are encouraged to donate sports and casual clothing for re-distribution to refugee camps worldwide. So far, more than 700 kg of sports attire have been collected.

21) Also in line with the message of giving, our schools have continued with their collection to support the Community Chest. This year, a sum of about \$720,000 has been collected.

CONCLUSION

22) Even as we strive to provide more opportunities for our students to participate, enjoy and compete in sports, we need to also provide students with a safe and conducive environment for these sporting activities. Safety is of paramount importance and we must make every effort to ensure a safe environment for our activities and participants. To facilitate schools' efforts in providing a safe environment, this year, we implemented the lightning warning system to give us early warning of inclement weather and to enhance safety of students in outdoor activities.

23) I urge schools to continue to enrich our students' experiences through sports. As I end my address this afternoon, I wish to announce that Mr Lim Lai Chuan, Principal, North Vista Secondary School, has been appointed Chairman of the Singapore Schools Sports Council for a term of two years. I wish to thank Mr Ang Wee Hiong, Principal of Hwa Chong Institution, outgoing Chairperson of the Singapore Schools Sports Council for his dedication and contributions. I would also like to thank Mr Goh Ek Piang, Principal of Hougang Primary School, outgoing Chairperson of the Primary Schools Sports Council, and now Deputy Director, CCA Branch, for his tireless efforts. I am also pleased to announce that Mrs Lee Hui Feng, Principal, Nan Hua Primary School, has been newly appointed as Chairperson for the Singapore Primary Schools Sports Council for 2008 & 2009.

24) It is now my pleasure to declare the 49th AGM of the Singapore Schools Sports Councils open. With this, I wish you another fruitful year of sporting participation.

25) Thank you

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