

**Speech by Zaqy Mohamad, MP for Hong Kah GRC  
at Parliament Sitting on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2010**

**Motion for Adjournment**

Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for giving me the opportunity to propose the motion:

“Propose to introduce a biennial Singapore Games to sustain the renewed enthusiasm and community support for Sports beyond the Youth Olympics Games and to build a sporting legacy, to develop sporting excellence and a sports culture in Singapore.”

**Legacy Beyond the YOG**

1. Mr Speaker, Sir. This motion is inspired by the athletes, organisers and volunteers of the recent Youth Olympic Games. Through the YOG, we saw our young athletes compete well – and who could forget, the medal winning performances of Isabelle Li (table tennis), Nurul Shafinas (taekwondo), Rainer Ng (swimming) and my personal favourite, the soccer boys (Irfan, Brandon, Shazwan, Jeffrey) – and not forgetting the others who also made us proud in representing Singapore throughout the Games.

2. During the Games, I remember the vociferous supporters at the stands during the various competitions, the many volunteers who braved the sun and rain to help us make the events a success and even residents who came took leave from work to support us as we ran with the torches in our estates.
  
3. This got me thinking - that building a sporting legacy, achieving sporting excellence and developing a sporting culture in Singapore – may not be a pipe dream after all. The only question is what platform can we use to showcase our local sporting talents – and yet achieve broad-based participation across Singapore? How can we bring the community together, bring families together through sports?

### **Biennial Games**

4. So, the concept of the Biennial Games was came up at a discussion – credit goes to my Parliamentary colleagues, Ms Josephine Teo and MOS Lee Yi Shyan - for initiating the idea.

5. Through the Biennial Singapore Games, we can create a platform that can bring sporting talents and community sports participation from across Singapore together. This will involve identifying a number of sports, getting the community to participate in a series of competitions and sporting events, culminating in the Singapore Games every two years.
  
6. The Biennial Games is not and should not be an end to itself. It should, over time, develop a sporting culture across Singapore. As we develop mass participation, there is also room to include Games for senior citizens and the disabled to keep them active and bond closer with the sporting community.

### **All-round Sports Development and Participation**

7. Singapore's sporting legacy should be as much about building a sporting culture as it is about achieving sporting excellence. And to succeed as a sporting nation (especially given our small population), it has to be development at both ends of the scale. We should have the cake and eat it too.

8. It is a tough balance for the Government in deciding how and where to put its money and focus on sports:
  - a. At the pinnacle, where we develop sporting talents, push for sporting excellence and aim to win medals, or
  - b. Do we spend across a broader base to provide more for community participation, given finite resources?
  
9. I am mindful of the complexities and logistics implications in organizing the Biennial Games taking on a two prong approach. So, I believe we already are doing well in the former – the elite sports infrastructure and funding for sporting excellence. For the latter objective, I am proposing to develop our local club networks to achieve this to fill this gap in our sports ecosystem.
  
10. There is merit in doing this. If we look at nations with strong sporting cultures who are able to produce world-class teams - in particular, countries whose population sizes are comparable to Singapore such as Finland, Norway and New Zealand. They have some things in common - a sporting

culture that spans families, neighbourhoods, schools and that they also have a strong club culture.

11. The Singapore Sports Council estimates there to be about 1,600 clubs – ranging from the established Singapore Swimming Club to the community-based ones like People’s Association’s CSCs to the informal clubs and networks such as various cycling, soccer and running groups all over Singapore.
12. Our club networks exist today, but they seem to be fragmented and stronger within the schools and the elite end which are going for medals. There is a gap in between.
13. There was a recommendation of the Sporting Culture Report in 2008 by MCYS, suggest strengthening the clubs to bridge the gap in mass participation. This is an ideal proposition given the Singapore Games proposal. With the right team (SSC, PA, Schools Conveners and the NSAs), there is scope to align their activities, pool funding and sponsorship support to bring better synergies to the clubs and the sporting calendar.

14. As a start, we can focus on the 26 games featured in the Olympics. If this is too much, we can consider starting with just 10-15 sports first and expand as we gain more traction.
15. By harnessing the synergies between the SSC, NSAs and PA's CSC, we can organize events for these sports in different formats all year round. I recall when I played Rugby in school, competitions were whole year around, 7-a-side tournaments in the early part of the year, 15-a-side mid-year and 10-a-side towards the end of the year. In the same spirit, we can look at different ways to keep the sporting calendar fresh, interesting and engaging.
16. We should also find ways to involve participation from the disabled community, taking a leaf out of the Para-Olympics and use this opportunity to develop more sporting facilities for them or adapt current infrastructure for such use.
17. For senior citizens, one recent suggestion I think is being considered is to look into new sporting formats so that senior citizens of various abilities can participate together. I like this approach.

18. Ideas taken from other Games such as wheelchair basketball may prove to be interesting formats for senior citizens. This will also help provide greater community bonding and outreach to seniors who want to remain active through sports. This unique sporting format can also help them bond and find common games which can bring family members and neighbours of all ages together as a team.

### **Bringing the Community Together Through Sports**

19. As we speak about bringing people together, we should not forget the spirit behind the games – the 20,000 volunteers and thousands of supporters. They made the difference to the success of the YOG.
20. During the YOG soccer matches of Team Singapore vs Montenegro and Haiti, I had the pleasure of being ushered by Mdm Rosminah Ahmad and Ms Shuheerah Rosli. They were warm, friendly and gave me the impression that they were mother and daughter as Mdm Rosminah was referred to as 'mummy'.

21. Only later was I told that Mdm Rosminah was often referred to by the younger ones as 'mummy' because of the maternal mentor role she played to the young volunteers. Now, this exemplifies the spirit of volunteerism and community bonding.
22. I agree with Minister Vivian in his speech earlier, that it is amazing the extent our volunteers go through to make everything a success. I hope that the Games can bring about this Singapore Spirit on a sustainable basis and inculcate it in our young.

### **Whole of Government effort**

23. The reason for raising this proposal as a motion of adjournment and not a PQ for MCYS is that for Singapore to develop a sporting culture, we need to start pooling our efforts across Ministries to make this work.
24. With such sporting buzz being generated, we should also use this opportunity to maximize the use of sporting facilities in our estates, especially the schools. We can do better to maximize the scheme to use school infrastructure in the



estates. I can understand the apprehension of principals and their concerns about safety and maintenance are valid.

25. I'd like to suggest that MOE re-consider the policy of using school infrastructure in the estates. Make the policy an opt-out scheme rather than an opt-in. So, schools who feel that they have a strong case against opening up their facilities should then explain their case if they choose to opt-out. This is important to promote more ground-up initiatives and grassroots sporting events in the neighbourhoods.
26. I also hope that MND can review how we can make sporting facilities more accessible, and build more sporting facilities in the neighbourhoods to cater to the wider sporting interests of the community. Take the cue from the sports organized in the Singapore Games and align these facilities to the overall sports roadmap for Singapore.
27. MND should also explore how we can also make existing sports facilities adaptable to seniors and the disabled to be more active in sporting activity.

28. Finally, for MCYS and MTI, as we develop the sporting industry and enable more private sector involvement, we need to ensure that sporting events remain affordable for even low-income earners. My concern with the Private-Public-Partnership (PPP) arrangement for projects such as the Sports Hub is that sporting events organized should remain affordable and accessible to all.

### **Malay Speech**

29. Sukan Olimpik Belia (YOG) yang baru berlalu adalah satu peristiwa sangat berharga bagi Singapura sebagai tuan rumah. Sebagai hos, Singapura telah melabur dengan bijak demi masa depan generasi muda.

30. Antara manfaat besar yang diraih boleh dilihat dari sudut jangka panjang. Pertama, kita dapat melihat sendiri kemunculan generasi muda Singapura yang berkebolehan dan berbakat. Hakikat bahawa mereka berupaya bersaing dengan peserta lain dari seluruh dunia menjadi satu kebanggaan dan inspirasi kepada warga Singapura, terutama golongan muda.

31. Kedua, YOG melihat penyertaan segenap lapisan masyarakat, sama ada sebagai sukarelawan, penaja mahupun setakat penonton dan penyokong. Ia meluaskan lagi ruang bersama untuk para penduduk Singapura mengambil bahagian.
32. Saya rasa semangat YOG ini harus kita teruskan dengan menyediakan peluang-peluang kepada warga Singapura bukan saja dari segi persaingan sukan dan pengasahan bakat muda tetapi juga penyertaan orang ramai.
33. Dengan adanya acara seperti Sukan Singapura, mungkin dua tahun sekali, kita dapat meneruskan semangat itu dan sokongan masyarakat.

## **Conclusion**

34. Singapore has defied the odds in so many ways and in areas where we never thought were possible. In the YOG, we have shown that we have the talents and are able to garner support from the community to make a dream, a reality.

35. The YOG can be more than just a memory in our history books. It has to be more than us saying, "yes, it was 2010 and we were there to experience it". It would be nice to see the YOG leave a sporting legacy and it being that spark that inspired us to create a sporting nation.
36. With this, I end my proposal and leave the Motion for the House to consider. Thank you, Mr Speaker.