

**SPEECH BY MR SAM TAN, MINISTER OF STATE (PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE & MINISTRY OF CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH), AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF ROMP 2015 ON 15 AUGUST 2015, 1.30PM, AT CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES BRANCH (MOE), EVANS ROAD**

Reverend Bernard Foo, President of Harvest Care Centre

Ladies and Gentlemen

Distinguished guests

Boys and girls,

1 Good afternoon. I am happy to join you here today for the official opening of ROMP 2015. I understand that some 1,500 young people are here today, to compete in four sports – basketball, soccer, tchoukball and pool. ROMP, which started in 2008, is becoming very popular among young people; it is indeed a meaningful platform for young people like yourselves to come together, participate in exciting games and share a common interest in sports.

**Sport prepares you for challenges in life**

2 There are few things that rally our emotions and fire up the Singapore spirit like sports. Sports is a social catalyst that can spark off meaningful interactions and bring people together to do great things. That's why we encourage everyone, from the young to the old, to lead an active and healthy lifestyle through sports. Team sports, in particular, develop character, and build confidence, resilience, teamwork and many other soft skills which will prepare you for the challenges ahead in life. Regardless of

your choice of sport, I'm sure you will learn about discipline in training, excellence in playing, and also, humility in losing. In Singapore, we're so used to being successful in everything that we do, that we're very good at managing success. But because failure is not commonly found in our vocabulary, that sometimes, we tend not to know how to manage failure. In sports, someone will win and someone will lose. Through winning, we learn how to be humble. Through losing, we learn how to take things in our stride, and stand up when we fall. And that's the beautiful part about sports.

3 At the 28th SEA Games in June, our Team Singapore athletes exemplified the qualities of sportsmanship we have all been so inspired by, and which some of us can aspire towards. Our athletes exceeded all expectations by clinching 84 gold, 73 silver and 102 bronze medals. But beyond the record-breaking feats, our athletes showed tremendous heart and a strong fighting spirit. I attended many of the SEA Games events and competitions. Until now, I can still remember how our women's volleyball team came from behind to win a crucial match against the Myanmar team. I was there, at the courtside, cheering our Team Singapore team on. The young ladies were two sets down, and the game was led by the Myanmar team. But point-by-point, game-by-game, slowly our athletes fought back and eventually they won the match 3-2! The game was so exciting, and the atmosphere so exciting, that everybody was shouting. In the end, our women's team won the match, and I lost my voice. This is the kind of fighting spirit that we want to see in Singaporeans, not just our athletes, but ordinary people as well. For a small country like Singapore, the fact that we can come this far, is because of our fighting spirit. This is something the

government will want to invest funds and support in, to make sure our young people will have a lot of platforms to fire up their spirit.

### **Volunteerism builds character**

4 Like sports, volunteerism builds character too. There are about 200 of you, some of you have volunteered and spent many months organising this event – from registration, food booths, first aid to scorekeeping. Let's put our hands together and give our volunteers a round of applause!

5 One of them is Ernest Pwi. Ernest first played basketball in ROMP four years ago. This year, he has returned to be part of the organising committee, to bring ROMP to even more young people like himself. Like most volunteers, Ernest had to make time for all the meetings, even though he is working as an army regular and is also pursuing an electrical engineering degree. Despite his busy schedule, Ernest believes he can add value to the event, and share his experience with the participants. In return, he has picked up event management skills too.

6 You can further combine your love for sport and volunteerism again later this year, when Singapore hosts the **ASEAN Para Games** for the very first time. This will be another excellent opportunity for you to volunteer your time and energy. Our para athletes have been preparing very hard, and are determined to put on a good show to bring joy and pride not just to themselves, but to their family and to Singapore. For those of you who have never watched or experienced disability sports, I encourage you to sign up as a volunteer for the Games, or simply come and support our Team Singapore athletes as a spectator. When you see them in action, and

see how they overcome all odds with grit and determination, you will have a stronger belief in Singapore. With that kind of determination, grit and enthusiasm, we will be able to go very far. As you know, we celebrate SG50 this year. I have no doubt that, in another 50 years, we will become a shining red dot!

## **Conclusion**

10 On this note, I want to thank Reverend Foo and his committee, as well as all of you for having me here. I want to wish all of you a great day ahead. Thank you.