

TRANSCRIPT OF A SPEECH MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER,  
MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT THE SREE NARAYANA MISSION IN  
SEMBAWANG ON 12TH SEPTEMBER, 1965.

Mr. Chairman, friends,

I want to say how delighted I am this morning to be able to join you in presenting these scholarships to 10 students, \$100/- each, and not only to Indian students. The money probably came all from Indians because they are members of your Mission but the scholarships are also being given to Malays and to Chinese too.

It is these little gestures which make for harmony and understanding.

I remember reading not so long ago about some special scholarships they were going to name after one of their leaders in Malaya, and they were going to get everybody to contribute, but the scholarships were only for one group. It makes life a rather difficult and trying business. But that is now no longer our business: we cannot interfere. We mind our own affairs.

But I say, nevertheless, as Dr. Ismail has said in Canberra -- and he is a honest man who said that one day these two territories will come back again, but under very different circumstances and different conditions. And he was an honest man to say that if Singapore remained in Malaysia, there would be language and race riots in 1967. He said that -- I did not say that. He said that and it was reported in Canberra. I got the newspapers sent back to me. Because Singapore was setting the example in tolerance, multi-lingualism, multi-racialism; a multi-religious, multi-cultural society. And there are some people whose grasp of history is somewhat limited and they are the people who shout these slogans: " One race, one language, one religion"

It worries me. I think they ought to see the optician and put on their glasses. Then they will know there are many races, racial groups, but one nationality. I think they ought to see the ear specialist because obviously, their ears are not hearing properly. Or, they will know that we speak many languages. And they will know that today Sunday, Christians go to church: Friday, Malays go to their mosques: Indians have Thaipusam, Deepavali and their ceremonial occasions; so with Buddhists, so with Seventh Day Adventists, on a Saturday. And what is wrong about that?

We will set the example. This country belongs to all of us. We made this country from nothing, from mud-flats. It is man, human skill, human effort which made this possible. You came, you worked -- for yourselves, yes. But in the process, your forefathers and my forefathers who came here: we built this civilization.

It is one of the few cities in Asia where you can get anything you want. You pick up the telephone: it works; and it not only works internally. You can pick up the telephone and speak to Delhi, London, Tokyo, Canberra ---anywhere you want. Do you think you can do that just by shouting slogans? You can get the best in any of the hotels in meal. European food? You can get the best in any one of the hotels in town. Chinese food? What kind do you like? There is Cantonese, Hokkien and Teochew. Indian food? There are South Indian, North Indian: anything you like. Malay food? You like Sumatran food, nasi padang?

Where else in the world can you get this?

And I say, we will progress. I was sad not because Singapore was going to suffer: No. I was sad because by this separation, we could not help millions of our own people, our own countrymen in Malaya, in Sabah and Sarawak to progress with us. That was why I was sad. We could not help them any more.

They have now got to help themselves. They have got to throw up their own leaders and they have got to take a stand. We cannot interfere.

Here in Singapore, in ten years, Geylang Serai will be another and better Queenstown - all the shacks will be demolished. I say that for Singapore because I do not think Singapore is boasting when it says it can do it. It will do it. But do you think in ten years, the kampongs in Malaya will have Queenstowns? I do not think so.

If you want that, then you must have the thrust, the ideas, the dynamism, the push, the tolerance of each other. That is why I was sad for them who are our people. Not just Chinese and Chinese, Indians and Indians. They are many Malays here.

Half of our police force comes from Malaya. Their families are left behind there. They will be quartered; they will live in modern civilised conditions.

Their families will come down here and they will want to stay with them, and we will have to say "No" because there is a limit to what we can absorb. We have only got 214 square miles. It is a cruel thing to do this. But it has to be done, some people wanted it this way. We could have helped them emerge, but it was not to be.

But I say to you : Here we make the model multi-racial society. This is not a country that belongs to any single community: it belongs to all of us. You helped built it; your fathers, your grandfathers helped build this, There was no naval base here, and it is not the British who built it. It was your labour, your father's labour which built that.. My (great) grandfather come here and built. Yes, he came here looking for his fortune, but he stayed -- my grandfather was born here.

Over 100 years ago, this was a mud-flat, swamp. Today, this is a modern city. Ten years from now, this will be a metropolis. Never fear.

Some people think that just because we are a small place, they can put the screws on us. It is not so easy. We are a small place in size, and geography.

But in the quality of the men, the administration, the organisation, the mettle in a

people, the fibre - therefore, don't try. That is why we got booted out. If they could have just squeezed us like an orange and squeezed the juice out, I think the juice would have been squeezed out of us, and all the goodness would have been sucked away. But it was a bit harder, wasn't it? It was more like the durian.

You try and squeeze it, your hand gets hurt. And so they say, "Right, throw out the durian." But inside the durian is a very useful ingredient, high protein. And we will progress.

40 percent more than 40 percent of the purchasing power of the whole of Malaysia is in Singapore. We may be 20% of the population of Malaysia, but purchasing power, the capacity to buy goods like microphone, clocks, drinks, fans, lights, television, transistors: the money is here because here they work. And if people do not want that 40% -- 44% market -- well, that is their business. We want to open the market with them, but if they do not want it we will make our own soap ... We are buying soap from Petaling Jaya: Lux. You know, it is always advertised on TV: Lever Brothers. It is no harm, we buy the soap: It is good for them; it is good for us. We can make motor-cars together for the whole of Malaysia. And never forget, if it came to the point then Lever brothers may have to set up a soap factory here, because after all, nearly half the sales are in Singapore.

You ask the Straits Times: what percentage of their newspaper is sold in Singapore? True, we are only two-million. But we have the highest literacy rate in the whole of Asia. Nearly half of Straits Times, if not more, is sold here.

Here, everybody buys a copy. There, maybe one kampong buys one copy and everybody looks at it. It is true. We are talking now in terms of hard cash; the hard facts of life. And if people wants to be hard to us, then we have got to survive. And we can keep this market to ourselves. But this is all shortsighted. Let us throw our eyes over the horizon into the future. What does our Dr. Ismail

say: This will come back again. But under very different circumstances and different conditions.

You know and I know that anybody who says, "Go back to Malaysia on the same circumstances". Will be called a lunatic; isn't it? We were patient; we were tolerant. We put with it hoping that they would see the light. But we had to be firm. We could not give in. So, as a result we are out.

History is a long process of attrition. It will go on. And one day, it will come back together. You see, this is not like a map and you can take a pair of scissors and cut off Singapore and then take it and paste it in the South Pacific and forget about it. It is not possible. This is part of the mainland of the continent of Asia. And that Causeway .... You know, the Japanese blew it up; it was still rebuilt. It is part of history; and you are part of history. You are part of this place as much as I am; as much as Inche Othman Wok, my colleague, is; and I say that is the way it will be in the end.

Finally, may I congratulate you for having made progress since I last visited your mission in 1963, and especially commend you for having made a symbolic gesture in giving scholarships not just to Indians. But Indians who

contributed to the Narayana Mission took this money and gave it to Malay and Chinese students as well. In that way, we must prosper.

And I guarantee you this: there will be a Constitution which we will get re-drawn in which minority rights .... You know, it is very easy in Singapore for people to stand up and if you talk, "One race, one language, one religion," there will be a lot trouble, you know. We do not want that sort of thing. That is stupidity. So we are going to get the Chief Justice of India, Australia, New Zealand and a few others together with our own Chief Justice and a few of our eminent lawyers to draft "entrenched" clauses .... You know, "entrenched": no government can just cancel the clauses. Entrenched, and enforceable.

If anybody thinks he is being discriminated against either for a flat or a scholarship or a job or for social welfare relief because of race, or language or religion, he can go to the court, take out a writ; and if he proves that it was because of discrimination on the ground of race, language, religion, culture, then the court will have to enforce the Constitution and ensure minority rights.

We are an equal society. You are equal to me; I am equal to you. Nobody is more equal than others. In some places, they say, "we are all equal." But what they mean is they are more equal, you see -- which makes life very difficult. But



here, when we say "equal", we really mean it. We do not have to do it in Singapore. But we are thinking in terms of 100, 200 years, 1,000 years. You must help them emerge. And there is only one way: education and economist thrust.

And with those words, I wish you all peace, prosperity in Singapore.

Thank you.

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