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Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by Dr Lee Boon Yang, 16 Oct 99, 7pm

Singapore Government

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SPEECH BY DR LEE BOON YANG, MINISTER FOR MANPOWER & MP FOR JALAN BESAR GRC, AT THE  
DEEPAVALI LIGHT UP SWITCH ON CEREMONY HELD ON SATURDAY, 16 OCT 99 AT 7PM MAIN  
ENTRANCE OF LITTLE INDIA ARCADE, SERANGOON RD

Ladies & Gentlemen

1 It is indeed a great pleasure to be here this evening for the occasion of  
the Deepavali Light Up of Little India.

2 This Annual Deepavali Light-Up Ceremony has become a local tradition which  
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adds to the attraction of Little India. It will bring more Singaporeans and tourists to Little India to savour the Indian heritage that is an integral part of Singapore's rich cultural diversity.

3 The Hindu Endowments Board, as principal organizer, supported by Singapore Tourism Board and Serangoon Merchants Association, has expanded the festivity this year. Apart from Lighting Up the main thoroughfare of the Little India as in the past, five of the side streets have also been lighted up to spread the light and joy of Deepavali further. Other highlights of this year's Little India Light Up include the setting up of a "Festival Village" and the "Best Decorated Shophouse" contest.

4 The 3-week long Festival Village will be a showcase of Indian culture and heritage. Various Indian sub groups and even the Buddhist community in Singapore have come forward to provide cultural performances as part of the Festival Village activities. These performances reflecting Singapore's multi-culturalism, will add to the festive fun and cheers. Furthermore, the Little India Cultural corner, a one-stop interpretation centre focussing on Indian culture and history in Singapore, will add to the visitors' understanding and appreciation of this aspect of our multi-culturalism.

5 As Little India is one of the most popular free-access tourist hubs, we should make greater effort to promote and enhance this district. The Little India Shopkeepers and Heritage Association (LISHA) was formed in February 1999 to undertake this task. LISHA's aim is to enhance the attractiveness, vitality and business environment of Little India, while maintaining its distinct ethnic character. A pro-term executive committee has been set up and the committee is currently recruiting members and finalizing its work plan. I urge all merchants in Little India to give LISHA your support. You should come forward and make active contribution on the ideas and suggestions on how to add-value to Little India.

6 In conclusion, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the Hindu Endowments Board for organizing this Deepavali Light Up and to wish everyone a Happy Deepavali.

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