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Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by President SR Nathan, 22 Jan 2000, 3.00pm

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY PRESIDENT S R NATHAN AT THE PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION MALAY ACTIVITY CO-ORDINATING COUNCIL (MESRA) HARI RAYA AIDILFITRI RECEPTION 2000 ON SATURDAY, 22 JANUARY 2000 AT 3.00 PM AT THE MANDARIN SINGAPORE BALLROOM

Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs Mr Abdullah Tarmugi

Ladies and Gentlemen

My wife and I are happy to be with you today to celebrate Hari Raya Aidilfitri.

2 For Muslims, Hari Raya Aidilfitri marks the end of the Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting and alms-giving. It is an occasion for thanksgiving and forgiveness and signifies 'openness' of the mind and heart. It is also an occasion for the family and community to strengthen their ties.

3 We are entering an era of increasing globalisation of ideas, values and cultures. Many traditional and family values which underpin us as a community and society will be under increasing threat. It is therefore important that we continue to celebrate together our respective traditional customs and festivals as

we have always done in Singapore over the years. They not only help to reinforce moral and family values and foster a sense of identity and belonging to one's particular community, but also help other fellow Singaporeans appreciate them. However, Singapore being a multi-racial society, the promotion of the culture and traditions of any one community must continue to be done in a manner which recognizes the sensitivities of the others. In that manner, we will enhance our inter-racial understanding and mutual confidence in each other, and help build our common Singaporean identity over time.

4 I am indeed pleased that MESRA and other Malay grassroots organisations are playing vital roles in enhancing such understanding and interaction among our people of different racial origins. MESRA has not only brought together a diversity of Malay interest groups in the various electoral constituencies, but has also succeeded in getting the Malay community to be more actively involved in grassroots activities, involving other races, at our various community centres and community clubs. All these efforts of MESRA help to deepen the Malay community's relations with other Singaporeans and increase its active involvement and presence in all mainstream activities of Singapore.

5 MESRA's programmes and activities having always been in tandem with developments at the national level, it gives me much pleasure to learn that MESRA is now actively involved in preparing the Malay/Muslim community for the advent of the Knowledge-Based Economy or KBE. Last year, MESRA organised a dialogue, two national education seminars and four roadshows on the KBE for about a thousand Malay community leaders.

6 In the new millennium, more activities and programmes will be needed in the cultural, educational and economic fields to help the Malays and Muslims in Singapore. Through them, the Malay/Muslim community will be better equipped not only to meet the challenge posed by the KBE, but also play a more active role in the national life of Singapore.

7 My best wishes to you, your families and well-wishers in the new year.
Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri.
