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NC/MAY/35/69(CULTURE)

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

Address by Mr. Wee Toon Boon, Acting Minister for Culture, at the Vesak Day Celebration held at the Victoria Memorial Hall on Friday, 30th May, 1969, at 3.15 p.m.

I am very happy to join you today in your celebrations of this auspicious day. This year's Vesak Day celebrations are all the more auspicious because it is also the 150th Anniversary of Singapore.

Vesak Day is dedicated to the memory of the great Buddha who give to the world a legacy of compassion, love and tolerance. His message and teachings are of universal application. They have become to millions the light that leads to self-sacrificing and dedicated service in the cause of human happiness.

The 150th Anniversary of Singapore finds our people carrying on with the traditions of their forefathers with the same faith and with the same dedication in the same knowledge that the path towards the future is not easy, but that with faith in righteousness we can achieve what we have set out to do. We, in Singapore, are a very fortunate people, for we are the inheritors of the oldest cultures in the world. History and geography have brought together people of different religious faiths and cultures who have jointly built up Singapore from a swampy wasteland to the modern metropolis that it is today. Our inheritance still remains with us, and will continue to remain in the future. The various festivals that take place every year reflect the fact that we live in a free society where every faith and religion has an equal place. The design of the places of worship themselves indicates the diversity of art and culture which exist side by side, each with its distinctive philosophies, but all bound together in the common cause of righteousness and human good which in turn reinforces the moral fibre of our people.

All that is good and great in life have been achieved by the faith of Man in himself, by what he believes is right and proper, by what he believes will lead to progress and happiness. The world today is different from what it was over 2,500 years ago. Science has made it possible for mankind to benefit in a myriad ways. Today mysteries that had defied Man previously are being solved and great advances in knowledge are taking place. These have been made possible because the faith of Man in himself and his fellow-men continues to give him the courage to tread into the unknown in a bid to gain knowledge which can be used for the betterment of society.

We, in Singapore, today are building an economic and social base that will bring to the people of Singapore progress and happiness. For this we must have faith in ourselves and in all that we believe in. All Singaporeans, whatever their religious calling might be, have the common task of ensuring that Singapore's future history is charted on the abiding faith of its people, on their firm belief that progress spells happiness and contentment.

May I, in conclusion, wish all Buddhists a very happy Vesak.

29TH MAY, 1969.

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