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SPEECH BY DR AHMAD MATTAR, MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND
MINISTER-IN-CHARGE OF MUSLIM AFFAIRS AT HIS HARI RAYA AIDILFITRI
DINNER AT THE ISTANA ON SATURDAY, 11 APRIL 1992 AT 2000 HOURS

As we all know, Hari Raya is a time for giving -- to the poor especially, and we promise to remember that for some people, fortunately not many in Singapore, the strain that we have just experienced in The Fast is an almost permanent condition. And to the community we give a renewed commitment, often in the form of charitable or social work.

2 But what of our country? What are the gifts we bring to Singapore?

3 For one thing, we bring a stronger loyalty.

4 What we have just experienced in Ramadan was not only a test of the individual. It was a signal reminder to the whole community, -- Muslim and non-Muslim -- that we are all made from the same mortal material;

that we have the same needs;

that we share the same circumstances;

that life is not different for us because we are Muslims.

5 We identify more strongly with other Singaporeans, just as they now identify with us.

6 The gifts we bring, to add value to the mainstream life of Singapore, also include the best qualities of our ancient heritage, the strengths of our Islamic tradition and cultural history: compassion, for example; patience in hard times; the ability to face life's challenges with courage and humour; a perennial resilience.

7 These are not nebulous qualities. They translate into concrete achievements. The latest National Census figures will show how far they have brought us, Muslims in Singapore, over the past ten years. I have quoted some figures in my Hari Raya Message a week ago. I don't intend to repeat them.

8 There is another quality central to our culture that adds to the quality of Singapore life -- a capacity to absorb differences without damage to communal unity.

9 As we reconcile our old standards and the demands of modern life, and as we debate among ourselves the competing demands of the temporal and spiritual worlds, we sometimes take divergent points of view. But still there is an underlying common sense that prompts us to find solutions to our differences.

10 Our tendency is towards harmony, and we shun those influences that seek to split us.

11 It is the same with our approach to material progress. Inevitably, some members of our community have advanced at a greater speed than others, according to their abilities. But as a community we have

not been stratified along economic or class lines.

12 This common understanding of the need for solidarity and stability enables us -- and MENDAKI especially -- to take the Total Approach to the upliftment of the Malay/Muslim community.

13 It has allowed us to put in place many programmes in education, social work, and economic advancement, that acknowledge differences within the community but which aid the process of levelling up without polarisation.

14 This has made a big difference. It has enabled us to provide a believable vision of a strong and confident society.

15 Given a strong enough commitment, by enough people, there is only a fine line between a vision and its realisation.

16 So to summarise, Hari Raya is a season of gratitude and goodwill in which we reach out to other Singaporeans in a spirit of cooperation and giving.

17 It is also a time for sober reflection on the lessons that the Fasting Month has taught us -- that just as our religious observances bring spiritual rewards, so hard work uplifts the community and secures a good future for our children.

18 We will continue to work to improve ourselves through our own efforts, through education as the root of our progress, through social work to provide a practical and emotional safety net, and through strategies that will improve our economic

profile.

19 These are aspirations worthy of the Malay/Muslim community,
and they are among the gifts we offer to Singapore as a whole.

Thank you

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