

# SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MP FOR SIGLAP CONSTITUENCY AND SENIOR MINISTER  
OF STATE (FOREIGN AFFAIRS), MR A RAHIM ISHAK, AT THE  
SIGLAP COMMUNITY CENTRE NATIONAL DAY DINNER ON  
WEDNESDAY, 30 AUGUST 1977 AT 8.00 P.M.

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The best compliment the people of Siglap Constituency paid me was by voting PAP by a large majority - 77% - in the General Elections in December 1976. This, despite my absence in Indonesia as Ambassador for almost three years. Your choice means that you continue to have confidence in the Party which has governed Singapore effectively and honestly for the last 18 years without break. More than that, you appreciate the fact that the PAP executes its plans and programmes in the best interests of the state and people of Singapore and that it would never let you down.

This is the first time we are together in more than three years. So tonight I do not wish to make reference to national or international issues. I shall instead talk about our constituency and certain problems which affect your day-to-day lives. In the last December elections, the electoral boundaries for Siglap were redelineated. The larger part of Frankel Estate which since 1959 formed part of Siglap was incorporated in the constituency of Kampong Kembangan. Almost the whole of the new Bedok Constituency was also a part of Siglap. While our losses have been their gains, Siglap was compensated with new land reclaimed from the sea on which high-rise flats for housing senior civil servants have emerged. Even so, the 1976 electoral register showed that about half of the electorate residing in Neptune Court had not been included in the Siglap roll. I returned to Jakarta four days after the elections and to this day have not had the opportunity to know the reason for this omission. Although the new HUDC flats are already completed, they are not yet occupied.



The East Coast Lagoon built for the benefit of all Singaporeans lies on your doorstep in our area. I know facilities available in the Lagoon cannot make up for the sea-front which residents along the former coastline had lost. However, I am sure they are magnanimous enough to concede that they had to give up the sea in the larger interest of Singapore's development. Chalets have been built for your use nearby. A food centre to be called the "East Coast Lagoon Food Rendezvous" will be ready soon. Besides this, a Seafood Centre has been proposed and I understand that the same management of several seafood caterers along East Coast Road near Bedok will take over. The area surrounding the Lagoon should be very attractive by the time these plans materialise. As of today, these are the concrete proposals which will be implemented in Siglap Constituency.

Meanwhile, Temasek Junior College incidentally lies within the borders of Siglap Constituency. Although it caters for the education of Singaporeans as a whole, it has a well-planned stadium of which recently two events took place, namely the Combined Police Band Display in June and the more recent Decentralised National Day Parade in August involving Bedok, Chai Chee, Changi Joo Chiat, Kampong Kembangan, Kampong Ubi, Marine Parade, Paya Lebar, Ponggol, Tampines, Upper Serangoon and Siglap constituencies. With the cooperation of the Ministry of Education, I have no doubt that we could use this stadium in pursuit of our own sporting and recreational activities.

Now I have listed some of the things which the government has done for you in our area. The question is: What are the residents of Siglap doing for themselves? In what way can they make their contribution to further the social and cultural development that we have achieved so far? In recent years, I noticed that there is a growing attitude among our citizens that as the PAP government has been so successfully looking after the welfare of the people of Singapore, there is no need for those not involved to come forward to help in the general development. Both the Chairmen of the Siglap Citizens' Consultative Committee and the Management Committee of the Siglap Community Centre, I am sure, are prepared to testify to what I have just said. I know most residents here live in



comfortable homes with things which make life pleasant: air-conditioned rooms, bars, beer in the fridge, carpets, lap dogs, if not Dobermanns, Alsatians and other hounds. If this should be so, there should be a greater sense of participation in the community. There should be greater interest and active participation in social work. It is all too clear that this aspect of social development must be a two-way street. The government cannot be doing everything while citizens recline in their soft settees watching colour TV all the time. Most of those serving in the Siglap Citizens' Consultative Committee and its sub-committees, Community Centre Management Committee, Women and Youth Committee and Residents' Association have been at their posts for many years, giving of their best for no material reward whatsoever. It is about time others come forward. The problem of succession and bringing up the second echelon leaders does not affect only the PAP. It is equally important that voluntary and civic organisations too have their share of new blood to take over as the older generation retires from active social work.

For in the final analysis good government depends on the active participation of the good citizens and the government can only be as good as what the citizens make of it. If our citizens are not interested in having good and efficient services, be they utilities - water, power, gas - or communications - telephone, public transport - and so on - the quality of these services is bound to go down, because we are prepared to accept second best. If the social services being made available, in education, social, cultural and recreational fields are not used by the citizens, they will stop being available. Similarly, with the community centres and the various committees, who have provided valued service to our community.

Many of you will recall the sterling service rendered by the members of the various committees in times of crisis in the past 10 to 15 years, as they went about rallying the people to be united against troublemakers, to work together in various improvement projects, to help our children in the villages and kampongs which were then still in Siglap, to get involved in healthy recreational activities. Today, with the widespread development and progress enjoyed by Singapore, the needs of the



citizens in Siglap have also changed, along with the rise in their standard of living. However, I am not convinced that the interest of our citizens has changed. If anything they want even better services to ensure a higher standard of living. They want the amenities and facilities to keep up with the changing times, for instance, the need for more mixing among our high-rise flat dwellers.

This is where the need for new blood, new ideas come in. It is open to our younger fellow citizens to come forward with their ideas and service to help improve the quality of the community centres and the performance of the various responsible committees. Our leisure hours should not be spent only on beer and mahjong or watching TV. We can work for better neighbourliness and a richer community life. New ideas are welcome on how to encourage residents of different housing estates or different blocks in the same estate to meet in friendly sporting competitions, or the forming of playgroups for young children of working parents, or activities involving our senior citizens who gave their best years for us in their time. All these are areas where government can give encouragement but not do everything for us. As citizens we have to articulate our needs and ideas for improving our community, especially at the local level. These ideas and suggestions can be more meaningful for Siglap if they come from the residents of our constituency - and I know that we are not lacking in well-educated and well-endowed people. All I ask is willingness to come forward and be counted. I am sure the people of Siglap have the pride in their constituency and the confidence in their abilities to ensure a better life for themselves and their children.

Finally, I wish to congratulate members of the Siglap Citizens' Consultative Committee who have been awarded with Long Service Certificates. Also to the babies as well as their proud parents for winning prizes at the Baby Show held here in conjunction with National Day Celebrations. To Dr Wong Kum Hoong for having successfully led the Siglap Citizens' Consultative Committee in winning First Prize of the 1977 "Keep Singapore Clean" Challenge Shield. And of course to all of you, I wish to say "thank you" for joining tonight's dinner.