

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER INAUGURATING
THE “KEEP SINGAPORE CLEAN” CAMPAIGN ON
TUESDAY, 1ST OCTOBER, 1968

It is 4 years since we first checked the decline in standards of cleanliness and spruceness, and got rid of cows and stray dogs in the city. This gathering tonight formally marks a new bid for healthier and more wholesome social conditions in Singapore. The Ministry of Health has geared itself for this campaign and more important, for the follow-up necessary. They have increased the capacity of the cleansing and health services. This is necessary to meet greater pressures of higher densities of population, more housing estates, greater consumption of preserved and packaged foods leaving more domestic waste, and more hawkers in public places. We must create a public awareness of everyone's duty to keeping Singapore clean. We can and will achieve higher standards by first improving cleansing services and second everyone, at home, at school and at work, making his effort to see that waste, rubbish and litter goes into proper bins for the cleansing workers to regularly collect.

Everybody can see the point of a neat home, clean kitchen, clean food and healthy children. But responsibility stops too often at the doorstep.

This campaign marks the raising of our social targets. Not only our young in schools, but also our adults must learn new habits.

The whole of Singapore has been so intensively developed that there are now no more enclaves, no refuge for the wealthy who can live unaffected by the standards of the poor. Even Tanglin, once upon a time surrounded by green spaces, today has Queenstown just a mile away as the crow flies. And if Queenstown has flies and mosquitoes, they will fly into Tanglin. Singapore has become one home, one garden, for all of us. And the way any neighbour soils his home and breeds flies and mosquitoes has become your personal business.

As standards of social behaviour rise, so social pressures will increase against anti-social behaviour of the unthinking or the incorrigible. The road shall not be littered. Drains are not dumping grounds for refuse. The public park is your own garden, and must be kept spruce and green for your own and everybody else's enjoyment. Lifts, staircases, passageways of either homes or offices are extensions of the home. Everybody can learn and acquire the habit of treating common user areas as one's own home, to be kept clean and maintained. And new laws have been passed to assist in inculcating these new habits even on the erring few.

We have built, we have progressed. But no other hallmark of success will be more distinctive than that of achieving our position as the cleanest and greenest city in South Asia. For, only a people with high social and educational standards can maintain a clean and green city. It requires organisation to keep the community cleaned and trimmed particularly when the population has a density of 8,500 persons per square mile. And it requires a people conscious of their responsibilities, not just to their own families, but also to their neighbours and all others in the community who will be affected by their thoughtless anti-social behaviour. Only a people proud of their community performance, feeling for the well-being of their fellow citizens, can keep up high personal and public standards of hygiene.

Every month some 300 to 400 people pay us a deep compliment.

They think so well of conditions in Singapore that they pay hundreds of dollars

each to boatmen to gain entry illegally and try to pass off as Singapore residents.

Over 90% of them are caught within a few days of arrival, and very few get away with more than a few weeks before being found out and repatriated.

Whilst we are flattered by the compliment they pay us, they are nevertheless cause for concern. For they come in without proper preventive health measures. Hence, we must always be prepared for the periodic outbreak

of cholera, typhoid, dysentery and other infectious diseases which they bring from time to time. This is all the more reason why we must maintain high public health standards, and be extremely vigilant to nip any epidemic in the bud.

The message to keep Singapore clean has been allowed to percolate for several months. We are making one special effort at exhortation. Then we shall be enforcing the discipline on those who do not respond to social suasion. We shall establish better conditions of community living – norms which will make for a pleasanter, healthier and better life for all. These standards will keep morale high, sickness rate low, and so create the necessary social conditions for higher economic growth in industry and in tourism. This will contribute to the public good, and in the end to everyone's personal benefit.

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