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SPEECH BY ENCIK OTHMAN WOK, MINISTER FOR
SOCIAL AFFAIRS, AT THE LORONG ABU KASSIM
MOSQUE, LORONG ABU KASSIM, OFF PASIR PANJANG
ROAD, ON SATURDAY, 19 MAR 77 AT 8.30 PM TO
CELEBRATE PROPHET MOHAMMED'S BIRTHDAY

On this auspicious occasion to mark the Prophet Mohammed's birthday it is again time for us to review how we have followed the tenets of our religion to the benefit of ourselves and society. There is no doubt that the Malay community is strong in its faith and in the practice of the religion. There has also been an enlightened approach to various issues affecting our lives as Muslims.

2 However, this strong faith and the practice of our religion do not seem to attract many of the young. The youths prefer to engage in undesirable practices such as sporting long hair, smoking and wearing the latest fashions. Religion becomes something which is good for their parents but not for them. The proportion of young Malay boys and girls who become delinquent is quite high.

3 In 1976, of the 662 juvenile offenders between the ages of 10 and 16 who appeared before the Juvenile Court, 157 or 23.7% were Malay boys. Between 1971 and 1973, an average of 70 boys appeared before the Court, but in 1974 there was a sudden

upsurge of 115 cases, an increase of 62% over the previous years. This upward trend continued in 1975 when 117 cases were registered. In 1976 there was a further increase of 29 cases over 1975.

4 While the numerical figures of juvenile offenders from the Malay community may appear insignificant, it is pertinent to note that the Committee on Crime and Delinquency reported in 1974 that for every juvenile delinquent brought before the Juvenile Court, there are 7 others who are creating trouble both to themselves and their parents and are on the threshold of delinquency and drug abuse. In 1976, 61 young Malay boys between 14 and 16 years were committed to the Drug Rehabilitation Centre for consuming heroin.

5 The problem of crime and drug abuse is more acute among young Malay adults between 16 and 21 years. In 1976, 123 Malay youths were placed on probation or committed to the Reformative Training Centre for various offences. More significantly, 275 or 29.6% of the committals to the Drug Rehabilitation Centre for heroin addiction were Malay youths between 16 and 21 years.

6 Another area of concern is the steady increase in female crime, moral delinquency and drug abuse. Five years ago, there was hardly any young Malay female getting into trouble with the law. Last year, for example, 11 females were placed on probation for various offences and 4 others were committed to the Drug Rehabilitation Centre for heroin abuse. Moral delinquency, that is, those who indulge in immoral or permissive sexual activities has also shown an increase, as reflected by the number of cases referred to the Social Welfare Department. Again, these cases that are known to the Probation and Aftercare Service and the Social Welfare Department do not necessarily represent the total incidence of female crime, moral delinquency and drug abuse among our female youth. I suspect it would be very much higher if other cases known to the Police, Central Narcotics Bureau and the Social Welfare Department are taken into consideration.

7 All these figures tend to show that amongst the Malay youths, there is a lack of moral ballast to make them stay away from

undesirable activities such as drug abuse which may lead to crime and other delinquency. There is, therefore, an urgent need for our religious leaders and parents to inculcate strong religious and moral values in the young. The stress should be on healthy living and the avoidance of undesirable social activities. It is through religion and the conscious education of the young to religious and moral precepts that a healthy young generation can be developed.

8 In this connection religious leaders should look to the new mosques that are being built under the Mosques Building Fund Scheme for better organised religious activities. There are multi-purpose halls in the new mosques which should be fully utilised to provide activities for the young. These activities, together with strong religious studies, would in some way contribute to the development of healthy and civic attitudes.

9 Whilst the religious organisations should stress on religious teachings and to organise activities to strengthen the religious pursuits of our community they should constantly

guard against infiltration by subversive elements. The communists who are ever present in our midst will strive by all means to gain a foothold in the hearts and minds of the people. They will attempt to infiltrate religious and other organisations to further their causes. Therefore, it is important that religious organisations and leaders in the community should not be made use of as pawns by these subversive elements. We should always be on guard against those who volunteer their advice and assistance for seemingly altruistic purposes but will have no hesitation to make use of people and organisations to advance their course.

10. Finally, I would like to wish you all the best in this year's celebration of the Prophet's birthday.

National Archives and
Records Centre, Singapore.

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