

# SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE

PUBLICITY DIVISION · MINISTRY OF CULTURE · CITY HALL SINGAPORE 6

MC.MAY.2/77(SOCIAL AFFAIRS)

SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS, ENGIK OTHMAN WOK,  
AT THE PROPHET MOHAMMAD'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS AT BLOCK 3  
DOVER ROAD VOID DECK ON SUNDAY, MAY 1, 1977 AT 8.15 P.M.

National Archives and  
Records Centre, Singapore.

- 7 MAY 1977

I want to talk to you today very simply and sincerely about some of the things which are close to my heart. All over the world, Muslims are gathered together to celebrate the birthday of our Prophet. Perhaps more important than the ceremonial aspects of the celebrations is the process of re-dedicating ourselves as Muslims in multi-racial Singapore to follow the teachings of the Prophet. We must never deviate from established religious principles relevant in the Singapore context which are based on the virtues of good living, the doctrine of universal brotherhood, tolerance, equality and progress which are part and parcel of the abiding principles upon which our nation is built and with which a multi-racial society like ours can gain strength and vitality.

2. In times of momentous changes such as the present, it is extremely important for Muslim parents and religious leaders to ensure that the aspirations, attitudes and activities of Muslims, especially the young, are guided by the age-old, time-tested principles in the Quran. Muslims should not only pay

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~~more attention to spiritual enrichment but more importantly,~~

the teachings they imbibed should be sound and grounded in principles taught by the Prophet and the Quran. No society is completely immune to false religious teachings. No society can rid itself of religious heretics who expound new but nevertheless dangerous religious doctrines. We should always be alert to wrong interpretations of Islam and not allow half-baked theologians from creating religious issues which confused and caused divisions among us.

3 One has to be very discerning to be able to identify false teachings which may appear to be sound on the surface. Often-times it is difficult, if not impossible, to do so. It needs a devout Muslim who is well-versed in Islamic principles and teachings to be able to identify a heresy and distinguish a true Muslim preacher from a religious heretic.

4 Quite apart from the spread of false religious doctrine which undermine our basic beliefs, there are communists and communalists who distort religious principles to cause confusion in the minds of Muslims. They highlight controversial religious tenets and practices and endeavour to arouse religious

feelings about them. They appear to be quite determined about this, judging from the admissions made by a Muslim editor of a local newspaper who was arrested a few months ago and the fact that the Communist Party of Malaysia had established an organisation called the "Parti Persaudaran Islam" (Islamic Solidarity Party) to gain Muslim support.

5 Religion is a sensitive matter. Mosque committees and Muslim organisations must be very careful in selecting speakers to address the congregation. Preachers and theologians should only be invited to address the congregation after consulting the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura regarding their religious backgrounds. The Majlis has a Committee on False Doctrines which can offer expert advice on this matter. It is a good practice to seek the advice of the Majlis to ensure that the credentials and theologians of the preachers / are bona fide. Foreigners who are here on Social Visit Passes are not allowed by the Immigration Department to address any gathering. If religious lecturers or theologians are to address any gathering in Singapore, the approval of the Controller of Immigration must be obtained beforehand. Those who are sponsoring the visits of these theologians or lecturers

should apply to the Controller of Immigration beforehand. They should also seek MUIS's guidance on the matter.

6 As a community we must always be on our guard against external influences which are harmful to us. We must fight against any attempts by others to cause friction by exploiting religious issues. Religious leaders must provide effective guidance in religious matters and make sure that religious principles are not distorted or misinterpreted. Above all, they must constantly stress the importance of tolerance, and mutual respect and understanding in religious matters.

7 I am firmly of the opinion that every child should be nurtured in spiritual education. We must make the utmost effort to lead our children through religion in the path of goodness and purity. Through the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura, the Government will continue to support the religious programmes such as building of mosques, pilgrimage and general assistance to Muslims.

8 The mosque building programme is now in full swing. Masjid Muhajirin, the first mosque completed under the Mosque

Building Fund Scheme, has been declared open on 8 Apr this year. Four other mosques at Queenstown, Jurong, Woodlands and Bedok/Chai Chee included under the first phase of mosque construction, are in varying stages of construction. All of them are expected to be completed towards the latter half of 1979.

9 Additional to these five mosques which were originally planned when the Mosque Building Fund Scheme was introduced, a new mosque at Ang Mo Kio new town has now been included under the first phase. The Ang Mo Kio Mosque is expected to be completed by the end of 1979. A site of 2,788.1 sq metres (30,000 sq feet), has been allocated for this mosque near the Ang Mo Kio town centres. It will be a large and modern multi-purpose mosque with facilities such as a library, class-rooms and offices, rooms for educational, social and cultural activities and a large hall for general use including weddings and social gatherings. It is expected that the mosque will cost over 1½ million dollars.

10 It remains for me to wish all of you the very best in this year's celebration of the Prophet's birthday. On this occasion, we must re-dedicate ourselves to serve our country,

our fellow citizens and God, and vigorously keeping within  
spiritual discipline, to bring peace in our hearts, peace in  
our families, peace in our homeland and the world. We pray  
to Allah for His Blessing on all of us.

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