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Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by Mr Sidek Saniff, 9 Jan 2000, 6.00pm

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR SIDEK SANIFF, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AT THE LIVE TELECAST OF A TAMIL HARI RAYA SPECIAL TV PROGRAMME TITLED "LET'S ALL CELEBRATE" HELD IN STUDIO A, CALDECOTT BROADCAST CENTRE ON SUN 9 JAN 2000 AT 6 PM

Assalamualaikum Wr Wbr

Let me start by wishing all of you Eid Mubarak / Selamat Hari Raya.

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1 I understand that this is the first time TV Twelve is making a special live telecast for Indian Muslims and Indians in general in conjunction with the Hari Raya celebrations.

2 I must congratulate TV12, the producers and the 2 main organisers of this event, namely, the Federation of Indian Muslims (FIM) and United Indian Muslim Association (UIMA) for the concerted effort in making this

programme possible.

3 In a multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-lingual society such as ours, it is important that we address the needs and concerns of all Singaporeans. Every Singaporean matters and his needs and aspirations must be taken into consideration in our planning and programmes.

4 The Indian Muslims are a small community within the Indian community. However, they have been able to preserve their own identity and have carved out their own niches in Singapore. Indian Muslims are known for their business acumen. Many of them have done well in various businesses and trades and have contributed to the economic growth of Singapore. Amongst them are businessmen like Jumabhoy & Sons, Naina Mohd & Sons (pharmacy, wholesale and retail), Gulam Bros and S S Mubarak (stationery and book supply) and Oil Mohamed (gem stone and diamond retail business). Many restaurants, such as the famous Islamic & Jubilee Restaurants, are run by Indian Muslims. Indian Muslims have also been prominent in the money changing and foreign exchange business, mutton distribution, glass/mirror/framework trade and in gem stone, provision store and spice trade businesses. Today, some of these successful Indian Muslim businesses, such as Mustaffa Centre, GMT Jewellers and Haniffa Textiles, have become household names in Singapore, especially within the Indian community.

5 The community has remained closely knit and has produced its share of successful professionals, businessmen and community leaders. However, the community must not become too complacent with its past glories and achievements. It must be prepared to meet the new challenges ahead. There

must always be rejuvenation and progress in the community. Young Indian Muslim leaders and professionals must emerge to take over the baton from the elders and senior citizens of the community and to lead the community into the new millennium.

6 Just a few days ago, we had made that historic crossing into the new millennium. In the last five years, rapid advances in information technology have transformed the way work and business are done. New modes of trading such as e-commerce have now emerged. The economy has expanded to cater to a global community. As the world grows more integrated in this KBE (Knowledge Based Economy) era, companies have to embrace these new technologies to keep pace and survive the keen global competition. We must take stock of these changes and move with the times. The recent emphasis on KBE in our education system is in this direction to better prepare our community to meet the challenges of the future.

7 Another emerging area is Biotechnology. The Government is now studying the feasibility of setting up a medical school at NTU to spearhead inroads into the fast-developing field of life sciences in anticipation of the next technological wave. We must likewise set our sights beyond what is in vogue today and poise ourselves to take advantage of market demands in the near future.

8 These fast-paced developments mean that knowledge today has a short shelf life. The Indian Muslim community and, for that matter, all other communities, must brace themselves for the new challenges and changing scenario ahead. We must be prepared to ride on the crest of new opportunities

and to tackle new challenges. Where necessary, the Indian Muslims must sharpen their skills and upgrade themselves through training and education. This emphasis on training and education is not new. It has always been the case in meritocratic Singapore, where anyone with the necessary qualifications can aspire to hold high office and responsibilities. In this new millennium, this renewed emphasis on life-long training and education is all the more important to ensure that we will not be left behind.

9 I therefore urge the present Indian Muslim leaders to pave the way and set the stage for the emergence and continuation of a successful Indian Muslim community in Singapore that will be able to meet the challenges of the future.

Wishing all once again Selamat Hari Raya / Eid Mubarak.

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