

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

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SPEECH OF MINISTER FOR HEALTH, MR. YONG NYUK LIN,
AT LORONG LALAT CITY CLEANSING DEPOT ON FRIDAY,
31ST JANUARY, 1964, AT 0600 HOURS IN LAUNCHING
THE 3-MONTH (FEB./APRIL) SPRING CLEANING CAMPAIGN

Why are we having a rally this morning? In order that the people of Singapore may know how important your work is. Your success will ensure good health for all. Your failure can bring disease and death to our people.

Every morning at 5.30 a.m., when everyone is sleeping, a few hundred of you will have already gone out to sweep up refuse from the streets, markets and drains. By 6 a.m., the whole force of 1,600 will be out, at work. You work very hard. I know it, because I have watch you at work, all over Singapore, for two weeks. Yet there is so much refuse everywhere. Something is wrong. Something is bound to happen with all this filth, and it did.

Within the last eight months, we had cholera not once but three times. The first time in May last year, with only one case at Potong Pasir and 1.2 million were inoculated. Last November, there were 26 cases. Of these unfortunately two died and 800,000 have been inoculated. Just yesterday, another case occurred in Pasir Panjang area. Yet there had not been a case of cholera for 35 years! (1928). So unless we do something about the accumulated refuse around us, which breed flies and flies and spread disease, not only cholera but other diseases can strike again and again. Do we want that to happen? No!

Certain things we can control, others we cannot. For example, we cannot control rain which falls from the sky. When there is no rain, there will be little water in our reservoirs. But we can control the use of water by introducing water rationing. Otherwise there won't be enough water even to drink, what more a good bath or water to clean our streets and flush our drains? We can also control the effective clearance of refuse in our midst, if we work hard enough and if we organise and discipline ourselves.

A month ago, (31st December last year) I announced a 3-month Spring Cleaning Campaign to clear away the backlog of refuse in Singapore. The last month had seen hard work put in by our Committee (whose members are here with me on the platform) to re-organise our system of collecting and dumping of refuse. Today, we are ready to implement the new system with a special fleet of 35 open lorries. It needs your whole-hearted support and co-operation to make it a success.

In the past, we depended too much on 1,300 heavy Street Bins (in 64 Bin Centres) (see model on my left). Daily, refuse collected after many hours of hard work from streets, markets and drains from your hand-carts were placed into these Street Bins. Refuse lay waiting in these Bins for one of 16 Crane Wagons to come to take it away to Kolam Ayer for dumping.

But the Crane Wagons never came. Sometimes, only five out of 16 Crane Wagons were on the road. How can any system work on this basis? Not only Crane Wagons but all our vehicles seem to be having frequent break-downs - either punctures or mechanical fault every day. This is being investigated into. As a result of these break-downs, only a part of the collected refuse in Bins are being cleared daily. Refuse, therefore, piles up at Bin Centres. The public is angry and fed up over this because they not only see the ugly pile of rubbish every day but also have to tolerate the awful smell of decaying refuse besides an ever increasing number of flies everywhere. You must be just as fed-up, because after all your hours of hard work of collecting the refuse, it stays to rot in Bin Centres and not dumped away at Kolam Ayer thus nullifying your efforts to bring all refuse out from your beats.

Our plan is a simple one. From today, we stop using so many of these heavy Street Bins. Only 16 Bin Centres (not 64) will continue using Heavy Street Bins for the few Crane Wagons that we expect to be in working order each day. The remaining 48 Centres have been changed over to use these smaller Carrier Bins (model on my right) which when loaded with refuse can be easily carried by two workers and tipped into Open Lorries for dumping at Kolam Ayer. The idea is simply to clear away all collected refuse daily, i.e. all Bin Centres should have collected refuse cleared away daily! After your hard day's work is over, you should also have the satisfaction of knowing that your colleagues will see that no refuse is to be left behind in any Bin in any Centre. All of you will then be proud and happy at your work - so will the public! And Singapore will again look cleaner and healthier.

Let us get down to working together for this one purpose. This place is called Lorong Lalat (lane of flies). It is not a good name. There will be flies if there is refuse. More refuse, more flies. Flies spread disease. Disease strikes at anyone - rich or poor, young or old, Who wants disease? Who wants flies? Nobody! We want to fight disease. We want to prevent flies from breeding. We want to kill flies, everyone of them! So let us get rid of refuse first. Get rid of refuse quickly and we reduce the flies also. Let us "spring-clean" our City during the next three months (February/March/April). Let us change the name of Lorong Lalat to Jalan Berseh (Clean Road)!

HANUARY 31, 1964.

(Time issued: 12 noon)