

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

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TEXT OF SPEECH BY THE POLITICAL SECRETARY TO THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE, MR. ONG SOO CHUAN, AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE "HARMONY WEEK," JOINTLY SPONSORED BY TEACHERS' ORGANISATIONS OF VARIOUS RACES, AT THE SINGAPORE CHINESE TEACHERS' UNION, ON SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, AT 3 P.M.

I deem it a great privilege to be able to attend this highly significant opening ceremony of the "Harmony Week" initiated by the three Chinese educational organisations.

The "Harmony Week" initiated by the three Chinese educational organisations is praise-worthy and I believe, as from tomorrow, this campaign which is aimed at promoting peaceful and harmonious living among the various races will be enthusiastically launched in all schools of the various language streams; and that through this campaign the goodwill and friendship of our brethren in this multi-racial society will be more closely and firmly harmonized.

Friends: It is essential that the "Harmony Week" should be launched in schools. Everybody knows that the children of today are the future leaders of our society and the pillars of our nation. If the concept and spirit of racial harmony can be instilled into the minds of the children from young, then, such concept and spirit will automatically grow and illuminate when these children grow up. In my view, your efforts towards this end will yield very good results.

On the eve of the launching of the "Harmony Week," I consider it necessary to review the unfortunate incident which took place a few weeks ago.

I hope the recent unfortunate incident will be the first and the last in Singapore. The recent incident has left a blot in the history of the fine tradition of racial harmony which existed between the various races in our country for the last hundred over years. If we wish to remove this blot, we must learn from the tragic experiences of the recent incident, raise our vigilance, re-establish goodwill and harmony between the various races, and restore our mutual trust, mutual understanding and mutual reliance so that unity among the races may be more closely and firmly strengthened.

The fact that the recent unpleasant incidents has subsided so speedily serves to explain that there is no real conflict between our various races and there is also no enmity between them. The cause of the problem lies with some irresponsible extremist elements who, in order to achieve their own end, have unscrupulously resorted to base means by instigating our brethren of the various races to go against one another. In fact, by their foolish act, they have unwittingly fallen into the trap set by our powerful neighbour to split our people.

We, the people of Malaysia, are fortunate to live in a newly-emerged and economically stable country and our happy life is built on the foundation of racial harmony laid by our ancestors. We must not only maintain this good foundation, but also strengthen it. Only in this can our country have a bright future and our posterity can inherit this fine living from us.

Dear friends:2/-

Dear friends: Teachers are the architects of human society. The task that you have to perform is an onerous one. Besides imparting knowledge to the children, you have still to cultivate in them a consciousness to be loyal to the country so that they may become useful citizens. This is very important. I am exceedingly happy that the various teachers' bodies and organisations have jointly sponsored this "Harmony Week." This is because the foundation of harmony and friendliness which is cultivated from young, is a very firm one and its usefulness is more effective. When children have the spirit of harmony and friendliness from young this spirit will automatically grow and illuminate when they grow up

Our nation is composed of people of many races. This is unique among the countries of the world and is also something which other countries of the world admire and praise. If we want to preserve this honour, we have to rely on the friendly and sincere co-operation of the various races.

In my opinion, we should have a common objective to work for the holding of this "Harmony Week." This is that we should have the determination to establish mutual trust and confidence between the various races, remove mutual suspicions and misgivings and furthermore, not to believe in unfounded rumours. This work should start from the base, which is education. There is no doubt that through this "Harmony Week," the students will have a greater understanding of this work so that goodwill and friendship between our various races will be more strongly solidified.

The chairman has just reported that the schools of the various language streams will from tomorrow enthusiastically launch a series of activities on the theme of promoting harmony; and we shall soon see the varied and interesting activities centred on unity and friendliness put up by the students of the various races. This will indeed be an inspiring scene to this campaign.

Today, on the occasion of the opening of the "Harmony Week" initiated by the three Chinese educational organisations, may I, with the utmost sincerity offer my congratulations and wish it smooth-going and success. Let us all pray that goodwill and friendship between the various races will exist without end, and the excellent tradition and spirit of harmonious association of the various races will remain forever.

AUGUST 16, 1964.

(Time issued: 1500 hours)
