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 Acc. No. NARC
 71 0060 402
 10 NOV 12 71 (SA)
SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

Speech by Inche Othman Wok, Minister for Social Affairs, at the launching of the Tree-Planting Day of the Pasir Panjang Constituency on Sunday, 7th November, 1971 at 9.00 a.m. at the Pasir Panjang Community Centre

As the tempo of urbanisation and industrialisation increases, we need to keep a close watch over our physical surroundings which have deeper significance than is often imagined. There is no doubt that to a great extent our physical environment channels our lives. Our citizens can shape the city, but we are also shaped by it. The process of "uglification" may first have developed in Europe, but in many other countries this process has gained ground not as a consequence of the failure of design but mainly as a result of certain interaction of economic, technological and cultural forces. If left unchecked, this process can lead to an increasingly despoiled, debilitated and even dangerous urban environment. Fortunate for us in Singapore, we have ^{the} experiences of others to go by, and with foresight and astute planning, we can avoid some of the mistakes others made. It is with this in mind that a "Keep Singapore Pollution-Free" Campaign was launched. And now, a Tree-Planting Day is being started. These two programmes are in a way inter-related. They are intended for the improvement of our living environment.

A clean and green city to some countries less well organised may perhaps be an idyllic dream. But we are already quite close to realizing this. Given the leadership from community leaders and the active co-operation from all concerned, this project to give our city a greener look will certainly succeed. The ingredients for success are pride in ourselves, our community and our homeland, and the sense of social purpose. If we fail, we will have in the end a concrete jungle where there is no cheer and no scenic beauty.

Through a project like this, we hope to build into our community a sense of common purpose and co-operative endeavour, without which we go down to the filth and squalor which prevails in some countries in the world to-day. Equally important, our spirit and morale and sense of well-being depend very much upon our living environment.

We have already made considerable progress in keeping our environment clean. If you go around various parts of Singapore, you should now be able to see the result of the Government's effort in making Singapore a greener city. The plants along the roads, and road-dividers, in traffic roundabouts and numerous other areas - these are all part of the overall effort to make our city a pleasant and cheerful place to live in. What is required obviously is for everybody to do his bit to support this effort - hence this Tree-Planting Day. With more trees and plants being planted, our living environment becomes more pleasant. There will be more shade, more natural beauty. It is hoped that through this project we can enhance the aesthetic sense of our younger generation and educate them to be more appreciative of natural beauty and understand the part they have to play in looking after our city and caring for our plants and trees.

Every time I go around this Constituency I see changes. It is cleaner and neater. People are healthier, better dressed and better housed. This shows that the consciousness of being a community and the sense of social pride is there. Let us get together each to do his bit to make this place greener. Let us break up the cold effect of masses of brick and concrete with the verdure of trees and shrubs. Together we can make Singapore