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SPEECH BY CIK MAWAN WAJID KHAN (MRS A RAHIM ISHAK) AT
THE DINNER AND DANCE ORGANISED BY THE SIGLAP WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION ON SUNDAY, 12TH AUGUST 1973 AT 7.30 P.M. Acc. No.
AT THE CRYSTAL BALLROOM, HYATT HOTEL

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The Honourable Foreign Minister, Mr Rajaratnam & Mrs Rajaratnam,
The Honourable Minister for Culture, Mr Jek Yeun Thong & Mrs Jek,
Ladies & Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the Siglap Women's Association to welcome you all to this occasion tonight. Not only are we meeting in this beautiful room of this grand hotel, we also have the honour of having our Foreign Minister, Mr Rajaratnam and Mrs Rajaratnam and other dignitaries to grace this occasion. This is an important occasion for the Siglap Women's Association because it is the first time that the Association is celebrating National Day on this scale. May I take this opportunity to thank Committee Members of the Association and all others who have helped to make this evening's function possible.

Our Association believes that women in Singapore have equal responsibility as men in contributing towards nation building. One of the aims of our Association is to instil among its members and among women generally, an awareness of the important role they can play in society. They can make their contributions to society either by engaging in useful community and welfare work in their spare time or by entering the competitive fields of the professions or industry.

Fortunately for women in Singapore, as many fields of employment are open to women as to men. Our Finance Minister announced recently that the Government intends to provide employment opportunities for 75,000 women in industries. In labour-short Singapore, it is crucial that more women come forward to join the labour force. In this connection, the siting of light industries in the vicinity of housing estates should encourage more women to take up employment in these industries. With the provision at the same time of more creches

in the housing estates, it would make it easier for married women with families to go to work at places within easy reach of their homes.

I realise that there are two factors which might inhibit more women from seeking full time employment in the industries. Firstly, the feeling that they lack the requisite skills needed by industries. This, I feel, need not be a drawback. There are ample opportunities for women to learn and improve upon their skills, for example, by attending Adult Education classes or by taking up courses offered in the community centres. Moreover, most industries do offer on-the-job training for more specialised skills.

Secondly, there is the problem of large families. The only solution for this is to practise family planning and have smaller families. Then, the women's place need not always be in the home.

What I have just said may draw criticism from certain quarters. The already acute problem of getting household help will become more acute as more women seek employment in industry. The developed countries have in many cases tackled this problem by managing without domestic help. There is no reason why we in Singapore cannot do likewise. This is the price we have to pay for progress. As the old adage goes: You cannot eat your cake and have it. Thank you.

Now I have great pleasure in calling upon the Foreign Minister, Mr Rajaratnam to address you.