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SPEECH BY DR AHMAD MATTAR, ACTING MINISTER FOR
SOCIAL AFFAIRS, AT THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S BIRTHDAY
CELEBRATIONS AT THE MASJID SALLIM MATTAR, MATTAR
ROAD, ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1980, AT 8.30 P.M

Today, we celebrate the Prophet Muhammad's birthday. Ours is a small community which has its own mosques where we can gather together for worship. It is an interesting thought that in other gatherings in the 83 other mosques in Singapore similar birthday celebrations are also being held. Throughout the world millions of the faithful in thousands of mosques similarly do honour to the founder of Islam.

It is exciting to know that we are numbered amongst a brotherhood of over 700 million Muslims in the world. In all, we make up about a third of the world's population. These are indeed stirring times to be part of, and to witness the resurgence of Islam.

Today, we do honour to the Prophet Muhammad, the spokesman of Allah and the founder of our great religion. Apart from the celebrations to mark His birthday, I am sure that we will give greater honour to the Prophet and glory to Islam if each of us lives a life in accordance with His teachings. It is not so much the outward trappings of our religion that is important. It is whether or not we are good examples as followers of the Prophet.

As one of the races in a multi-racial and multi-religious society in Singapore we are watched by others on our individual conduct. We are then judged as a community on the basis of individual behaviour and achievement. If we are good and peace-loving people it will redound to our good name. On the other hand, if we tend to be quarrelsome, we will be regarded, both as a race as well as representatives of the Muslim religion, to be difficult and troublesome people.

Impressions created are firmly imprinted in the minds of people whom we meet and work with in our daily lives. Rightly or wrongly, they are difficult to erase once they have been set. If as individuals we behave badly then all our outward expressions of piety, the grand mosques which we build cannot erase the image of ourselves in the minds of other people.

As Malays2/-

As Malays and Muslims we have some good characteristics which are well regarded by our fellow-citizens. We are regarded as kindly and easy-going persons, generally peaceful and tolerant but capable of being roused to irrational anger. But there are, as you know, other traits which are less flattering.

How do we set about fashioning ourselves into a new image? Perhaps it is the hardest thing to achieve. But we should strive for perfection. We could build on our good characteristics. The motivation could be the ambitions which each of us has for ourselves and our own advancement.

The inspiration will be the teachings of our Prophet who has given us sets of rules of virtuous living. We should strive to lead lives according to His word.

For our own development a basic acquisition is that of knowledge through education and learning of skills. If we are able to advance ourselves through improvements in our abilities the virtues which we have adopted from the teachings of Islam will enhance our standing and example. For instance, if we are more successful, our contributions towards the mosques and towards charities will be increased.

On this occasion when we remember the birthday of our Prophet, it is my wish that success will crown your future endeavours and may we be worthy followers of the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.
