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SPEECH BY PRESIDENT SHEARES AT THE STATE DINNER IN HONOUR OF
THE PRESIDENT OF BANGLADESH ON WEDNESDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER 1978

It is my privilege, on behalf of the Government and people of Singapore, to welcome Your Excellency to our country. We welcome you as one of the founders of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the leader of a talented people who, like us, are trying to realise a thriving, dynamic modern state.

Although both Bangladesh and Singapore are young nations, our peoples have had historical ties with each other, largely via sea-borne trade and travel. Your Excellency's visit is a reaffirmation of the traditional links between our two countries and peoples.

Bangladesh and Singapore are both on the southern rim of Asia. As members of the Commonwealth, we have common historical experience and cultural influences. When Bangladesh was established in December 1971, we were among the first to recognise the new nation and rejoice in her freedom.

Since then Mr President, and particularly after you assumed office, we have followed with great interest and sympathy, the efforts of the people and Government of Bangladesh to grapple with their seemingly insurmountable problems. We admire the courage, dedication and drive that Your Excellency has brought to the immense task of development of your country. Singapore wishes you success in your attempt to break the fetters of poverty and backwardness.

Your Excellency, Singapore, like Bangladesh, is dedicated to peace, stability and progress. We want a secure environment in which we can pursue the urgent tasks of securing prosperity and happiness for our people. We want peaceful, friendly and constructive relations with all countries, especially those close

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to us in South and Southeast Asia. In particular, we wish to see an expansion of trade and economic relations among the countries of the region where short sea and air communications are distinct advantages.

Mr President, I am happy to note the steady development of relations between our two countries, especially in the economic and trade fields. The recent exchanges of visits by trade and industrial missions will lead to an increase in two-way trade. Singapore is ready to cooperate with Bangladesh in every way. Through modest but practical steps, I am confident our relations will progress and build up economic and trade ties and help mutual cooperation and partnership.

Your Excellency, I sincerely hope that you and members of your delegation will enjoy your all too short stay in Singapore and that you will return home with a better understanding of us and of the peace and stability that prevails over our region.

Gentlemen, I now request you to join me in a toast to the good health, success and happiness of President Ziaur Rahman and the progress and prosperity of the people of Bangladesh.

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