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SPEECH BY PRESIDENT SHEARES AT THE TEA PARTY HOSTED
BY THE MAJLIS UGAMA ISLAM SINGAPURA TO CELEBRATE
PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S BIRTHDAY AT SHANGRI-LA HOTEL
ON SATURDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 1979 AT 4.00 PM

The celebration of Prophet Muhammad's Birthday once a year is designed to promote the common bond of spiritual association not only between the followers of Islam but also between peoples of other faiths, and persuasions so that the flame of fraternity, kindled by the Prophet, may be kept burning through all ages.

The Koran emphasises strongly the concept of brotherly love. All other great religions also teach us that living for one's own self is not the design of religion. The test of the truth of religion is the promotion of brotherhood. It is the failure to realise this truth that is responsible for so much discord, dissension and disharmony in much of the world today. Followers of all religions should remove the causes of friction and create a new era of mutual goodwill and fraternity so that we may live on God's earth in peace and prosperity.

We should remember that religion is not all ritual, prayer and meditation. For the balanced development of the human race, spiritual activity and physical activity have to be combined. There are ample exhortations that man should make sustained and honest efforts to ensure for himself all the economic requirements of physical existence, namely, food, clothing and shelter. In the absence of these basic economic needs, one cannot think of spiritual values.

Religion promotes moral standards of honesty and unselfishness in our daily activities. Singapore in the last two decades has witnessed tremendous changes due to rapid modernisation, urbanisation and industrialisation. These changes in turn affect the cultural and social attitudes of our people. Parents, religious and community leaders

should be mindful of the need to inculcate strong religious and moral values. They should be aware that unsociable attitudes like hippism, drug addiction and self-indulgence can develop and should therefore consciously counter such evil manifestations by setting good examples in their own lifestyles and in their attitude towards materialism. the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura has an important role to play in propagating the teachings of Islam to its followers, to urge man to work towards social justice, economic prosperity and national unity.

In conclusion, I wish all of you a joyous celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday.
