SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT BYC/MC. JN.8/61

TEXT OF NATIONAL DAY MESSAGE OF THE
PRIME MINISTER, MR.LEE KUAN YEW, TO
BE READ IN ALL SINGAPORE SCHOOLS ON
FRIDAY, JUNE 2,1961.

EMBARGO: NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR BROADCAST
BEFORE 1900 HOURS, ON FRIDAY,
JUNE 2, 1961.

Two years ago Singapore became an internally self-governing State. If size is what determines the importance of a country and its people then Singapore would be of little importance to anyone other than to ourselves.

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Fortunately it is not size but quality which counts. Ancient Athens was a small state, but its vigorous and alert people gave birth to ideas and philosophies which are as alive today as they were 2,000 years ago.

In Singapore we are trying to solve problems which few bigger and more powerful countries are called upon to solve. We have to weld people belonging

to many races and cultures into one nation - a Malayan nation, in spite of the fact that they will all continue to learn their own mother tongues and keep alive their own traditions. But although you are learning in different languages, in Malay, Chinese, Tamil and English schools, you are all learning about the same things. You are learning the need for tolerance and respect for each other, and the need for all to learn the National Language, Malay, so that one day soon we can really all speak and understand one another in one language. In this way we can become a truly united and strong people.

This is a task that will take many years. Those of you who are now in school will have to continue this great task of building our Malayan nation.

Whether you are in Malay, Chinese, Tamil or English schools, you must learn to think of yourselves as Malayans first and last. Unlike your parents you are being taught and brought up to think of yourselves as Malayans.

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Our parents were brought up in a different world. They were never trained to be Malayans so that some of them still think of themselves as Malays, Chinese, or Indians, not as Malayans.

There is another important difference between the days when your parents went to school and today. We are hoping to build a modern society in which everybody will have a better life because we will have machines and factories to make more and more of the things that make life easier for everyone. This means that we will stop being a backward community which only grows food, taps rubber, or mines tin, and sells them to the European countries in exchange for European manufactured goods.

We are now hoping to manufacture these goods ourselves. This means that many of you will have a big part to play as engineers, technicians, fitters, mechanics, and factory workers.

The days when people thought that to work and dirty one's hands was a sign of lowliness have long passed.

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We are building more and more vocational and technical schools where more of you will learn how to use your hands. Recitation of poetry and writing of essays are important things in a civilized society. But important also is the turning of screws and lathes. They make our modern world hum.

In you, our school students rest the hopes of all our parents, hopes for a better future, hopes for a more just and prosperous society. Make the best of your school days. And when you pass your last examination and leave school you will be better able to carry on the task that we have already started of building a new and more just Malayan nation.

JUNE 1, 1961 (Time issued 2000 hour)

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