

**PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH AT "BREAKING OF THE SOD" FOR
THE MEMORIAL TO CIVILIAN VICTIMS DURING THE JAPANESE
OCCUPATION, ON 15TH JUNE, 1963.**

Over 20 years ago, in February 1942, we went through a cataclysm experience. None of us here in Singapore at that time will ever forget it. All of a sudden, the world that we knew came to an end. The present then was agony, the future bleak. Part of the agony was a sudden disappearance of tens of thousands of our young men, mostly civilian, and some volunteers. Most of them who disappeared were Chinese, but there were also Indians, Malays, Eurasians, Ceylonese and others. Even two Sikh families were massacred.

However painful the past, we have to live and plan for the future, without being hobbled by past experiences. Whilst we cannot altogether forget the past, we must try and salve the wounds and blur the scars.

This ceremony, dedicating this ground to the memory to those of all races and religion who died in Japanese-occupied Singapore, is part of the process of making the past less unbearable, enemies though the Japanese may have been. But today they contribute to our industrial growth for, of industrial

countries, they are the ones with the lowest cost in managerial skills, technical know-how and industrial equipment.

We hope that animosities will soon be resolved with a suitable gesture of atonement from the Japanese Government. We cannot altogether forget, nor completely forgive. But we can mute some of the animosities that rankle in so many hearts, first in symbolically putting these souls to rest, and next in having the Japanese express their regret for what took place in a sincere manner.

It is in this hope that I officiate at today's ceremony.

National Archives of Singapore

15th June, 1963.