TRANSLATION OF A SPEECH MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT A NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION DINNER AT GEYLANG SERAI ON 25TH AUGUST, 1966.

It was two years ago that I came here for the first time to talk to you. That was in August, 1964. At that time, I came here together with Tunku Abdul Rahman.

So much happened within the two years. I do not want to go over the ground again. What has happened has happened. We must live and move forward. It is useless to look back.

When we separated last August, I felt very sad. Separation meant that we had lost our battle. We had wanted to established a multi-racial and tolerant society within an area which included Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak. Now, we are independent. We are by ourselves – only Singapore.

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I believe that we can, in Singapore, build a just and equal society. We can give equal opportunity to everyone although there are 75% of Chinese origin.

For two years, 1964 and 1965 we were in Malaysia. There were elements who used language, race and religion to threaten and to cow us. We did not run away. We debate it. I read the Berita Harian. I could not read the Utusan as it is in Jawi but I read the translation provided by the Ministry of Culture every morning. The paper was continuously playing up these sentiments of race, language and religion and it did it for more than a year. Nowadays, the issue is Muslim Law. There has been discussion on this for three to four years. Non-Muslims did not interfere in this. We left it entirely to the Muslims community to decide. Having no other issue, some now make capital out of religion.

Last year one evening, I visited the Jalan Penggaga Community Centre in Kampong Melayu. We have a plan to build flats in this area and in Kampong Melayu, but we have not implemented it yet because they said that we were trying to push the Malays out.

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Now that we are independent, do you believe that we want to push the Malays out? Let the people think and decide for themselves for their own good.

I hope the people – not only the leaders – will gradually understand our objectives. It may take five to ten years. We are all going to be here for a long time. We will show that a democratic, Socialist Government can improve the living conditions of our citizens, regardless of race, language or religion.

We are not doing this to catch votes. If it is only for the sake of elections, I need not worry about Geylang Serai and Kampong Kembangan. They are only two seats.

But I believe that if we are to live and progress together, no one race should be left behind.

With this in mind, we have to re-organise our education, housing and employment programmes so as to provide equal opportunities for one and all. I do not mean extra benefits or wages, I mean equal opportunities.

Finally, I wish to thank the members of the Citizens' Consultative Committee and hope that you will always give your cooperation.

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Thank you.