TRANSCRIPT OF A SPEECH MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR LEE KUAN YEW, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE CONGREGATION OF BUDDHISTS FROM ASIA HELD ON 4TH JANUARY, 1967 AT PHO KARK SEE TEMPLE, 5½ MILESTONE, THOMSON ROAD.

Friends and fellow-citizens,

In many respects, we in Singapore present a unique example of the new society which will find more and more manifestations such as ours as human transportation becomes easier and easier and communities of different races, creeds, languages begin to intermix.

Throughout the history of human civilizations, there has always been a coincidence of the power of the Church and the State -- from very ancient times, from very tribal conditions to the more sophisticated civilizations of the universal State and the universal Church.

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There has always been a parallel set of authority between the material and the spiritual needs of a society. And sometimes, it is the Church that wields the final authority and, in recent times, more the State.

In Southeast Asia, as power is transferred from alien European minorities back to the indigenous populations, a problem of transition occurs in which temporal power has been handed to a group of elected representatives who depend upon the support of the majority opinion of the population who, in turn, are open to influences by prevailing religions which had existed before the Europeans came. And so there is a dichotomy between the State and the Church.

And where this dichotomy becomes acute, then trials and tribulations are the lot of that society -- whether it is prime ministers who get assassinated, or riots take place in the precincts of the holy walls of a temple.

In Singapore, we are trying to prevent any recrudescence of the assertion of a majority religious group from either dominating or coercing the others into similar conduct.

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It is true that our Constitution means that temporal power is vested in those who are elected and who are therefore, able to command the support of the majority of the population. It is true that there are one or two religions which would probably, be able to command the allegiance of a majority of the

population. But it is not true that if we allow this to happen, the sum total of human happiness would be increased.

We have seen what happens in other parts of the world where a majority seeks to coerce a minority -- whether it is religious, racial, linguistic -- into conforming and seeks to use its influence over the majority of the population to invoke the administrative capacity of the modern State to bring about conformity. The end result then, must be a retrogressive one for I do not believe that we can increase the sum total of human happiness by pushing back the clock.

The open society -- open to all the influences of a world grown smaller through man's means of rapid communication -- must face up to these problems of multi-cultures, multi-religions and multi-languages.

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And, alone in Southeast Asia, we are a state without an established Church. There are others who officially proclaim this policy of the secular state to the happiness of their community but who are now facing tremendous pressures from the majority sect to use the powers of the State to bring about conformity and compliance by minorities. Whether their secular societies will continue to progress and prosper and ensure the continuance of tolerance, goodwill and forbearance amongst different groups with different social and

religious practices depends upon the capacity of the temporal power to resist these encroachments. But alas, there are other states that actively create and strengthen their religious support.

We are unique in that all religions are free to flourish. And as with this temple, so it is with all the other churches and places of worship in Singapore. Obviously, to be able to flourish without the revenues of the state backing it, it must tend to the spiritual needs of some sections of the community -- and to the good. But where the State exercises its supreme powers of extraction of revenue to solidly back one particular institution, it must mean, in the end, the gradual erosion of the freedoms of the other communities and the adherence of other religions to seek their own solace and their own spiritual salvation.

It is not for us to prophesy what is to happen in the countries around us. But it is within our capacity to determine that in our society, this shall not happen. And whether it is 10 thousand Sikhs in Singapore following the practices of a Guru which established them into a separate religious group a few hundred years ago or whether it is the pervasive, absorbing beliefs of the Buddhist, the Government holds the scales fairly and justly between all. Not because there is any virtue in this and there will be salvation from all sects for members of the government in after-life in all the various places for the repose of

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the soul, but because we are convinced that in this way we ensure the greatest happiness of the greatest number whilst we are here on earth.

And, I would like to believe that I will always attain the support of all, including the willing assent of the majority community, for policies which mean forbearance and tolerance to all minority groups and religions.

Finally, may I wish you all of the Buddhist faith, peace and happiness and progress in your religious institutions.

Thank you.

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