SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT GEYLANG SERAI

MASS RALLY ON SUNDAY, JUNE, 11TH 1967.

It is four years since I last visited the Geylang Serai Constituency in September 1963. They have been four eventful and momentous years in which we have all grown older and, I hope, wiser. We have become more experienced in identifying our problems, both within Singapore and within Southeast Asia.

It is a pity that we did not make as much progress in the last four years in Geylang Serai as we would have wished. The speed of progress in the social and economic conditions was better in the four years from 1959 to 1963, before we entered Malaysia. Looking back, perhaps some of our problems could not have been avoided. We were diverted from constructive work. Our energies and our resources and much valuable time were wasted as a result of communal politicking. What has happened in 1964 and 1965 has left its mark on the thinking and feeling of our people. They have also affected the course of subsequent events. They have given us a deeper appreciation of the techniques and methods used in communal politics. However, one good result was that everybody understood that in multi-racial Singapore no one can derive any advantage from the exercise of communal politics. No community and no political party gets any credit or advantage for politicking along communal lines.

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It has taken nearly two years after separation for feelings to subside and a sane, rational, thinking atmosphere to be restored.

It is only after I was convinced that the people of Geylang Serai, both Malays and non-Malays, wanted to make a fresh start in co-operative and constructive endeavour that I arranged to tour this constituency. The Government intends to take steps to improve the social conditions in housing, roads, drains, lights, sanitation and community services. But because we believe in a democratic tolerant society, we cannot force co-operation from those who do not accept the fact that ours is an equal multi-racial society. There are some who believe that by constant repetition of unreasoning and unthinking statements about who Singapore should belong to and who owes who else a living, they will force the Government into making concessions. To them, I have only this to say: the PAP Government is always sensitive to public opinion and will respond quickly to reason and logic. But it is not impressed by obscure and ominous hints, however vehemently repeated.

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My colleagues and I have decided to concentrate all our efforts in those areas where there is a sincere desire to work with the Government to get on with the business of helping people who want to help themselves. Whether it is roads, drains, electricity, community centres, scholarships, welfare allowances, housing,

or clinics, we shall respond to those who wish to cooperate with us in our effort to help them. Those who get more pleasure in fierce words and exaggerated postures we shall leave alone, for if they get satisfaction out of hot words instead of constructive cooperation, then so be it. I hope my tour today will mark the resumption of the speed of progress we made in the four years 1959-63 before Malaysia.

I have not come specially to seek your political support. You will know that as a result of the Barisan Sosialis deciding to boycott Parliament and the Communists taking the battle to the streets with sticks and stones, riot and arson, the P.A.P. is certain to continue in office for the next term. We will win the next general elections even if we decide to abandon the kampongs in Geylang Serai, Kampong Kembangan and Southern Islands. But we do not intend to abandon them.

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We think it is wrong not to help those of our citizens who live in these three constituencies who want to make a fresh start in multi-racial co-operative endeavour in spite of the unhappy experiences of 1964 and 1965. To our Malay citizens I want to give them this assurance: That the Government with the support of the non-Malays are prepared to concentrate more than the average share of our resources on our Malay citizens. We want our Malay community to

have every opportunity to train and equip themselves for the industrial Singapore of tomorrow. But this enterprise is only possible if our Malays enter into the spirit of the challenge, to work, learn and train, so that they can increase their earning capacity. Just something for nothing will never solve the problem.

What happened then in 1964-65 were aberrations which distorted the course of our progress. We have plans already drawn up to improve the physical conditions and social amenities in these three constituencies. Let those who want progress come to the Citizens Consultative Committees to discuss their problems quietly and work out plans for a better livelihood. I have set up a committee of senior Malay officers in the Government Service to advise me on the ways and means by which we can accelerate the educational, social and economic advance of our Malay citizens. Those interested in having their views considered can get in touch with my secretary who can arrange for their written and oral views to be considered by this committee.

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There must be an awareness of realities and an acceptance of the challenge to work, learn, train and educate ourselves for the world of tomorrow. We are destined to live in a more and more urbanised and industrialised society. The kampongs where one house stands on one piece of land, with well water, kerosene lamps and sepak raga under the coconut trees is giving way to the

modern multi-storey flats of which the Geylang Serai Complex marked the beginning. Past ways of living and earning a living are no longer adequate in the modern world of which Singapore is a part. Let those who wish to be part of this modern world come and talk quietly and seriously about the plans that we have to make Geylang Serai a living equal part of the new Singapore you can see growing up and symbolised in what is being built in Queenstown and Jurong.

Finally, let me add that whatever else we may not do, let it never be said that we did not set out to share the progress, the wealth, and the amenities that we have created with the energy, the enterprise and the resourcefulness of a young, migrant society.

We cannot force people to be part of a modern Singapore if they do not wish to be a part of it. But to those who, for political or other reasons, seek to isolate and to separate a section of our community, let me say this: there is nothing they or anybody can do to stop the progress which the natural zeal and energy and dynamism of our population will achieve. Whatever may happen in an Asia which in the last 20 years has seen only more turmoil, we are one of the few societies which have continued to improve in educational standards, in living standards, in social values and in cultural performance. We are determined that this community shall be given that basis of effective administration and

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internal solidarity to secure the advances which we make year by year, and to secure them for all time. This is a community that is here to stay for the next thousand years.

We are not a transient community. We have not built this in order that we shall be destroyed and this shall be given away. We have built this because we believe that a thousand years from now, our descendants will build upon it and testify that when 4 great streams of human civilisation -- one Western and three Asian (the Indonesian and Malay civilisations, the Indian and the Chinese) -- meet in confluence in Singapore, it brings forth a great flourishing of human endeavour.

This is a very rare society. It stands at one of the great crossroads of the world. It is not inward-looking. Every time an aeroplane passes and every time a ship lands, new modern influences enter into our thinking and our feeling. We are not wallowing behind in quiet self-contentment and in ignorance. Ours is the constant search of a restless young people full of energy and vitality for new ways to reach fulfillment.

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My message simply is this: We will reach fulfilment and we want to share it. Please let us work together and make it that much the more happy for

everybody. And I would wish that on my next visit here, in 3 or more years' time, we would have had a newer generation come forth -- more keen and more eager to partake of the activities which could make this a really great example of multi-racial co-operation and progress.

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