

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW,
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OF THE TIONG BAHRU COMMUNITY CENTRE,
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MORE GRACIOUS LIVING

Whilst we are busy striving to achieve greater economic growth, to offset British military expenditure which will reduce to zero in 1972 (1965 - 20% of G.N.P.; 1968 - 11.1% of G.N.P.), and to create more rewarding jobs, we must not lose sight of nearly as important social and cultural goals. Otherwise life could become mean and ugly. Whilst we may achieve spectacular rates of growth, 12% in 1968, at current prices, there could be very little of the gracious or the beautiful in our lives. For, at the end of each day's toil, one of the most important purposes of all this planning and effort is that life should be more than just existence, the business of making a living.

Social objectives which can raise the quality of life must accompany the hard-headed pursuit of economic and security objectives. Our surroundings, the home, the factory, the shops, the roads, the whole of our environment must be

improved, not just for a few in their villas and bungalows in the more wooded sections of Singapore, but for everyone, whether in H.D.B. flat or kampong. A pleasant city, clean and green, with parks and gardens, music and paintings, drama and light entertainment. With over 50 school bands of 50 players, ultimately nearly 130 bands, one for each secondary school, we should in five years' time to get together 150-200 instrumentalists for a symphony orchestra.

In the next five-year plan, beginning 1970, we are going to build 100,000 housing units, 20,000 units per year. They will be better designed to live in and to look at, better spaced and sited, with amenities that make for gracious living -- parks, swimming pools, playing fields, recreational centres, shopping arcades. Architects and administrators can achieve higher standards through more experience, greater efficiency and an allocation of more resources into these targets. But at the same time we must educate the families who have left the slums to leave their old habits behind and adopt new social patterns of behaviour without which life cannot be agreeable for their neighbours in these new high-rise blocks.

So far, 22,000 flats have been sold under the home ownership scheme, or just over 20% of the H.D.B. homes. With judicious use of C.P.F. savings, and concessions through lower assessments and other attractions, we should enable more than 70% of our people to be on the way to owning the H.D.B. homes they live in.

On the other side of Tiong Bahru Road are four new housing blocks where the old Outram Road Prison used to be. On the ground floor, in the centre of each block, is a large attractive ornamental fish pond. Whilst the Housing and Development Board can provide for these amenities, water, fish, rocks, shrubbery, elegance and beauty, they can only be maintained if new standards of behaviour are adopted, both by the people who live there and those who visit them. Bad social habits like pouring left-over soft drinks into these ponds, or tossing cigarette butts, empty cartons, do not make for gracious surroundings. A consciousness of beauty and a desire to maintain and improve the beauty of the neighbourhood must be part of the new way of life.

Competitions have been held, the cleanest block, the greenest garden, and so on. But there will always be the recalcitrant. Some, from time to time, must be made examples of. At the moment, we are planning to form committees to look after each block of flats. These committees will have representatives from

each floor in a block. They will be able to improve the control of noise nuisance, the cleanliness of the public passages, corridors, lifts, stair-cases, and surrounding grounds of each block. For undertaking these social duties, committee members will be accorded certain privileges. Gradually we should be able to re-educate the people into more considerable and cultivated living. And when they move out from the squatter huts into modern homes, they must leave their own inconsiderate ways behind.

We can teach the children in the schools new habits more easily. The adults in the offices, factories, and hawker pitches, will have to be re-educated in their homes. Just as we have succeeded in eradicating hopelessness, ignorance, squalour and poverty, in the same way, so also we can create a more socially sensitive people, appreciative of beauty and the arts.

It is these higher social and cultural standards which, when achieved, can improve the quality of our lives and make the toil and struggle worthwhile for ourselves in our own lifetime.
