SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF OUTRAM PARK COMPLEX ON 8TH MAY, 1970

Mr. Chairman, Friends and Fellow-citizens,

When I received a message that there was a blackout, I wondered whether the organisers had the ability to react to the unexpected. It is the ability of a people to respond quickly to the unexpected that decides whether they survive, or they are swept aside by events.

I was not interested in guessing whether or not somebody deliberately planned this blackout. I was more interested to see how the machine responded. I am reassured by the response. There was no confusion or panic and the ceremony is able to proceed, though late by half an hour.

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I have read several books written by generals about wars fought by other generals. The thing I am constantly reminded of is that from the moment the commander has pressed the button, control of the events goes over to the local commanders until the battle was over. During the heat of the battle it is the captain, the lieutenant, the sergeant, the corporal, who makes the decisions.

So too with our society. The question is whether our corporals, sergeants, lieutenants and captains in economic and other fields have got that presence of mind, to take quick but sound decisions in unexpected situations. I believe we have these qualities in our people. The problem is to make sure that the right persons are put in the right jobs.

I am especially pleased to take part in the opening ceremony of this Outram Road Complex. In 1963, at the opening ceremony of the Cantonment Road block of flats in my constituency, I said, "We shall begin to rebuild a more beautiful, a more gracious Singapore." Outram Road is more gracious than what it used to be. But keeping it clean, green and beautiful depends on the people. We can build beautiful homes. But if a lot of dirty and scruffy families move in, who remain dirty and scruffy, then you can reduce this place to a slum in no time at all.

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I do not believe this is going to happen. The young men and women who are working here and living here must remember that now it is up to them. Will the trees grow? Will the fountains continue to function? Will the fish ponds look as gracious and well kept? Will the shrubs look as green, once the opening ceremony is over? The children run through them and pull them up and apart. We come back next year and find things in shambles. But not if the people care,

not if they develop that feel for beauty in their surroundings. For then next year the trees will be bigger, the flowers brighter, and the people that much prouder of themselves.

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