SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT THE OPENING OF NEW PREMISES OF THE SINGAPORE NATIONAL PUGILISTIC FEDERATION ON SATURDAY, 26TH DECEMBER, 1970

The substantial consolidation and solid progress of the National Pugilistic Federation since it was formed in 1966 reflects and is part of the change for the better throughout Singapore. From a loose, disparate group of small pugilistic associations, with factions constantly feuding, this Federation has now brought them all together, the better to advance the interests of those interested in sustaining and continuing the traditional pugilistic arts, the dragon and the lion dances.

I am happy to have played a part in bringing this Federation about. The People's Association have also helped. You have been able to hold the first pugilistic competition in May 1967, and a second one about a week ago. On every National Day Parade, your members have provided a substantial contribution.

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I am proud to attend the Official Opening of your new Federation building, and the Inauguration Ceremony of the second Executive Committee. As you solve old problems new ones crop up to be resolved. This is true also of the

Government. Changes in our social structure and educational system mean that you cannot just carry on in the same old way, recruiting members through personal contacts in clan associations. You may find it useful to sponsor pugilistic clubs in our secondary schools, both the Chinese and the English streams. I have spoken about this to the Minister for Education and his principal officers. They would welcome your help providing trainers. Naturally, the more dangerous of the pugilistic arts should be taught only after the students have become adults and graduated from school. In this way, you will be able to sustain a continuing flow of young enthusiasts in these traditional forms of physical exercise.

We also propose to introduce other national gymnastic clubs, like bersilat, provided experienced trainers will come forward and help.

These changes in Singapore have also to be faced by the Government. If we achieve as much progress in 1971 as we have done in 1970, then we shall be able to absorb the loss of spending by some 30,000 British service families, the retrenchment of 16,500 civilian employees, and the disbandment of over 3,000 locally enlisted uniformed personnel. It is estimated that British military expenditure contributed somewhere around $350 million for 1970. It will tail down to negligible proportions after September 1971. But our performance for

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1965-70 shows that we have the capacity to ward off a sudden drop in our economic growth in 1972, or a high rise in unemployment, as a result of a precipitate drop in British military base expenditure.

When we have safely overcome this danger, we will spend more time and resources into upgrading the skills and increasing the earnings of our workers. We must move into the middle brackets of technology. Then the average take-home pay will go up because value added in the manufacturing processes is increased.

10 years ago, people were happy to get a one-room flat after waiting 1½ to 2 years. And they were willing to take it wherever the flat may be situated. Today, they get impatient if they have to wait more than 6 months to a year for two and three-room flats. They will not take it unless it is in areas convenient for their children's education and their place of work. This is the natural accompaniment of a 250% increase in our G.N.P. in the ten years from 1960 to 1970.

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Our standards of education will also have to be improved. Gradually, but not too slowly, we shall have more single-session secondary schools. Perhaps before 1975, we should be able to take pupils into Primary I at 5½ + years, instead

of 6+. Eventually, we may take children in at 5+, if we find that 7 years of primary education can make them more effectively bilingual. But this extra year will mean a substantial increase in expenditure on education. It will also depend upon the rate of progress we shall make and whether parents keep their family to not more than three children.

For the present, we still need to economise. The pace of urban renewal, the need to reduce pollution, the resiting of hawkers, all these are causing some hardship to some who are being re-settled in new homes, or new hawker sites, and to some taxi-drivers fined for reckless driving or whose taxis are belching smoke because they have not been properly maintained by their owners.

In the next 3 years, our workers and union leaders must strive to match the efforts of the government in helping our new industries to succeed -- electronic and electrical products by Plessey's and Philips, camera's by Rollei, synthetic penicillin by Beechams. Then we can afford more social services and amenities.

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In 3 years, most taxi-drivers will have the opportunity to join the Taxi Co-operation to own their own taxis by monthly instalments. Now the instalments must be paid within a period of three years. A prudent and cautious Ministry of Finance insists upon this. Later we can spread it over 5 years, provided the first

phase of the Taxi Co-op scheme is managed efficiently and succeeds. There is no reason why it should not.

Achievement must follow upon success. If we lose our vitality and our thrust, then we will slowly go down. This was what happened to some countries after the Second World War. The once-imperial powers of Britain, France and Holland, suffered a temporary decline after Empire was dissolved. But the Dutch and the French have been able to overcome the debilitating effects of this slide downhill by new economic opportunities in the E.E.C. The British are grappling hard to reverse this process of slowly going soft and sliding downhill. It will depend upon the will of their leadership, and upon the national pride of their workers, who must accept the discipline necessary in modern industrial relations, before there can be a restoration of national strength and prestige.

We are part of a vastly changed world. We have to meet rapid changes and the problems this creates. But if we stay trim and fit, we shall stay on top of our problems.

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