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SPEECH BY THE CHIEF MINISTER, MR. LIM YEW HOCK, AT
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY MEETING ON WEDNESDAY,
DECEMBER 4, 1957, ON THE POSITION OF INDIAN
CITIZENS IN RELATION TO SINGAPORE
CITIZENSHIP

As indicated by my colleague, the Chief Secretary, in his reply to question No. 1, I rise to make a statement in connection with citizens of India vis-a-vis sub-section (2) of section 8 of the Singapore Citizens Ordinance.

When the initial registration of Citizens under Part VI of the Ordinance was opened on the 1st November no Commonwealth country had been gazetted so as to allow its Citizens to make application under sub-section (1) of section 8 of the Ordinance. This was not done as this particular sub-section is meant to apply only to Commonwealth countries that afford reciprocal rights to Citizens of Singapore.

The Commissioner for the Government of India came to see me before I left for New Delhi and brought up the question of gazetting India as a Commonwealth country so that Indian Citizens in Singapore could make application under sub-section (1) of section 8 of the Ordinance. I pointed out to him that it was not possible to do so unless the Government of India afforded reciprocal rights to Citizens of Singapore. I also pointed out to him that Citizens of India were not deprived of their rights to register as Citizens of Singapore and that they could become Citizens of Singapore by

either registering as Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies and then register under sub-section (1) of section 8 of the Ordinance,
or register under section 9 of the Ordinance.

I went on to say that if the Government were to receive from his Government a declaration to the effect that reciprocal rights would be afforded to Citizens of Singapore, the Government would give favourable consideration to gazetting India as a Commonwealth country.

When I was in New Delhi last month I had a discussion with the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Nehru, as a result of which the Government has now received a communication from the Commissioner for the Government of India stating that the Government of India would take action to afford reciprocal facilities to Citizens of Singapore.

The Government has considered this communication and has decided to gazette India as a Commonwealth country under sub-section (2) of section 8 of the Ordinance. I must however point out that there is no true reciprocity as while the Government of India has a discretion to accept an application by a Citizen of Singapore for registration as a Citizen of India, the Minister under section 8 of our Ordinance will have no discretion in respect of an application by a Citizen of India for registration as a Citizen of Singapore. In spite of this we are taking this step and making it easy for Citizens of India to register as Citizens of Singapore in recognition of the role of the Indian community as an integral part of our society.

It will be clear from our action that the Government will give favourable consideration to gazetting any Commonwealth country which grants reciprocal rights to our Citizens.