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SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS, ENCIK OTHMAN WOK, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF MASJID MUHAJIRIH AT BRADDEL ROAD ON FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 1977 AT 9.40 A.M.

1. Masjid Muhajirin is the first mosque completed under the Mosque Building Fund Scheme. This mosque is the culmination of years of planning and is an excellent example of a project made possible through the joint efforts of the Government and the people, particularly the residents of Toa Payoh. This three-storey mosque which is very modern and large, is designed as a multi-purpose mosque with facilities such as a library, a hall for social gatherings including weddings, classrooms, and rooms for various educational, social and cultural activities. The total cost of this mosque inclusive of land is slightly more than a million dollars.
2. The Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura is proceeding with plans for the construction of four other mosques at Queenstown, Jurong, Woodlands and Bedok/Chai Chee. Construction work on the Queenstown Mosque is proceeding smoothly and it is expected to be completed by early next year. Piling is in progress for the Jurong Mosque which is scheduled for completion next year. Provided funds are available, the fourth mosque at Woodlands and the fifth at Bedok/Chai Chee are expected to be completed towards the latter half of 1979.

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3 In Parliament, it has just been announced that one new mosque will be built in each HDB new town where the Muslim population is 20,000 or more. In line with this decision, it is expected that several new mosques will be built at the new HDB satellite towns.

4 All these go to show the extent of Government support given to the various Mosque Committees to ensure that their plans to build mosques in new towns where there are concentrations of people, will be realised. I would like to see greater effort being made by these Committees to raise funds on their own instead of relying on the collections through the CPF. The funds collected can be used to defray costs involved in making further improvements to the mosques including providing for better finishes, additional fixtures, decorations and furnishings.

5 I am disappointed with the attitude of some mosque officials who decided not to continue with their fund-raising projects hoping that from now on everything will be catered for by the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura. This is a negative attitude. I would like to see mosque building as a community effort. Everyone should do his part to make sure that it is a success. This applies not just to fund-raising,

but also to the maintenance of the mosques and the planning and implementation of mosque activities when the mosques are in use. In this regard, I would like to see more community involvement, particularly with the participation of those with greater experience and knowledge as members of the Mosque Committees and Sub-Committees.

6 We live in times of challenge and change. The challenge is to build a better life for our people, a more prosperous and harmonious multi-racial and multi-religious nation. The change is from old to new, always reaching for greater heights of achievement, for technological progress, economic, social and cultural growth. It means that we as a community must be forward-looking, especially at a time when the whole Muslim world is re-adjusting its outlook to meet the challenges of the times.

7 Rapid urbanisation and industrialisation have brought about momentous changes in our physical and social environment. It is from this perspective that we must look at the changes around us. Large, modern multi-purpose mosques replacing old dilapidated mosques and suraus, new HDB flats and other residential and commercial buildings replacing age-worn shop-houses, shacks and kampongs, are

but part of the changing scenarios of the melodrama of progress and development of our young country.

8 From a trading migrant community, we have undergone a transformation of values, attitudes and style of doing things, to become a rooted community. Societies like ours have no fat to spare. They got to be lean and healthy or they are in trouble. This means new values, based on the understanding that we must remain all the time as a community that is rugged, resolute, highly disciplined and able to overcome any difficulty or danger confronting us. We have to infuse national and social values in schools at an early age. We should do this in mosques through spiritual guidance. There is dynamism in our society. I am sure we will succeed in our efforts in achieving higher standards of life in a tightly organised society like Singapore. What future our children will have will depend upon how well all of us can adjust to the changes and meet the challenges of this technological age, and how well we can mobilise ourselves to work diligently and resolutely for the common good.

9 The Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura must ensure that Muslim religious organisations work closely together to provide effective

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9 Getting our people together to build mosques and organise religious programmes is indeed a concrete step taken by Muslims in Singapore for the enrichment of our spiritual and social lives. The active support by Muslims as well as non-Muslims in mosque building is indicative of the growing sense of common identity and common purpose amongst our people. This remarkable phenomenon may be due to two reasons. Firstly, the mosques serve an immediate social need in satellite towns providing welcome space and accommodation for the pursuit of religious activities. Secondly, it represents the urge of our people to participate in community life. This is indeed a breakthrough in social integration. For the average man, their contribution towards the mosque building activities gives them a sense of fulfilment that comes from doing something worthwhile for others and for the community.

10 What we are doing here apparently attracts the attention of foreign religious groups. A local religious organisations is now collecting information on mosques in Singapore and I believe to feed to certain foreign religious bodies. Questionnaires have been sent out to all mosques requesting

for particulars about officials of mosque committees, religious activities conducted in mosques, the salaries of employees of mosques and other information. Mosques, under the law, come under the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura which administers them. By-passing the Majlis in obtaining the information and passing such information on to people in another country appeared to be an act of impropriety. We welcome foreign religious groups having open dialogues with the Majlis on mosque matters, but it is not proper for foreign religious leaders to come here seeking all sorts of information on our mosques and suggesting that Singapore should have a mosque committee to run all mosques which is tantamount to interference in local religious matters.

11 Religion is a sensitive matter. We must not allow others to raise religious issues to cause confusion and conflicts. In order to prevent this, religious organisations must work closely together and actively support the activities and programmes of the Majlis Ugama Islam. It must provide effective guidance in religious matters by underlining the importance of religious tolerance and mutual respect between

the people and by making sure that religious principles and practices are not misinterpreted or distorted in any way.

12. It now remains for me to congratulate the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura and the Lembaga Masjid Toa Payoh for their contributions towards the construction of this splendid mosque building and for the excellent arrangements made for this ceremony.

13 It is a great pleasure for me to declare this mosque open. Today is memorable because it marks the official opening of the first modern mosque built under the mosque building programme in satellite towns for the enrichment of our spiritual lives. This is not a dream, but a concrete reality glittering in the sunshine of assured success as long as all of us are united in spirit and in purpose to make our personal contributions towards the mosque building programme. We pray to Allah for His blessing on this mosque and on ourselves.

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