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SPEECH BY DR SEET AI MEE, MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION, AT THE HARI RAYA PARTY AT BLOCK 3, HILLVIEW AVENUE ON SATURDAY, 3 JUNE 1989 AT 8 PM

Saya mengucapkan selamat petang kepada tuan-tuan dan puan-puan yang di hormati sekalian.

I am honoured to be here this evening to join you in your celebration of Hari Raya Aidilfitri for our Muslim residents in Bukit Gombak.

Although Hari Raya Aidilfitri is an occasion observed by all Muslims, this and other such occasions like the Chinese New Year and the Deepavali need not be confined to the particular ethnic community observing it. Festive occasions provide an opportunity for Singaporeans from the various races to learn more about one another's customs and practices thus enabling us to better understand, tolerate and appreciate each other's cultures. It is only when we show that we are genuinely concerned for each other's problems and concerns that our society, as a whole, advances together, and that no particular community is left behind.

On the problems and challenges facing the Malay community, your leaders and you have shown resolution and determination to face the problems and issues squarely and not sweep them under the carpet. Over the years, you have made significant progress in the education, social and economic fields through MENDAKI and other self-help programmes.

I am particularly impressed by the good progress achieved by the community in education. The percentage of Malay students who obtained at least five 'O' levels increased by almost three times from 16 per cent in 1980 to 42 per cent in 1988. The percentage with at least three 'O' levels has gone up by about one and a half times from 48 per cent in 1980 to 78 per cent in 1988. More Malays are also making it to university and tertiary level education than before.

At the recent MENDAKI II Congress, it was revealed that there are still many pressing issues in the community that need to be resolved urgently. These issues, such as the drug abuse problem, the increasing number of cases of divorce, single parents, poor parenting and low-income households are complex and delicate issues that cannot be solved overnight. They need the concerted and total commitment of the Malay community and the help of the Government to resolve.

Besides finding practical and effective measures to overcome these problems, your Malay leaders and you have also looked beyond to the future by setting the goals to be achieved by the Malay community by the end of this century. You desire to have:

- a) better educational achievements with a fair proportion of Malays getting results comparable with the best;
- b) a successful and confident Malay business community, alert and ready to seize business opportunities;
- c) a culturally rich and vibrant Malay community.

These should be achievable goals. They are goals not just for the Malay community but the other communities as well.

Therefore, I would like to urge the Malay residents of Bukit Gombak to rally in support of your leaders and the Government who are going to help the Malay community realise its vision.

Finally, I would like to wish the thirty of you, who will be leaving for Mecca soon to perform the Haj, "Selamat Jalan and Selamat Pulang". May you have a pleasant and blessed journey there and back.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all those who have put in time and effort in making this function a success. I wish my Muslim friends Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri and all of you an enjoyable evening.

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