

-4 APR 1989

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

Information Division, Ministry of Communications & Information, 36th Storey, PSA Building, 460 Alexandra Road, Singapore 0511. Tel. 2799794/5.

89-YFB-3

Release No.: 15/MAR
08-2/89/03/11

**SPEECH BY BG (RES) GEORGE YONG-BOON YEO,
MINISTER OF STATE (FINANCE) AND (FOREIGN AFFAIRS),
AT THE OPENING OF MAJLIS PUSAT'S CARNIVAL
AT PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION HQ GROUND, KALLANG,
ON SATURDAY, 11 MARCH 1989 AT 4.00 PM**

Terutama sekali saya ingin mengucapkan terima kasih kepada Majlis Pusat kerana telah sudi mengundang saya ke majlis pembukaan karnival ini. Izinkan saya memberi ucapan saya seterusnya dalam bahasa Inggeris.

We celebrate today the 20th Anniversary of Majlis Pusat. Majlis Pusat promotes social, cultural and community-based activities among Malay Singaporeans. This is a good occasion for us to reflect on the progress and the hopes of the Malay community in Singapore.

The forefathers of many Malays in Singapore came from other parts of the archipelago. Many were drawn to our island by a spirit of enterprise and adventure.

The Bugis people, for example, were remarkable seafarers. In the 17th Century, they spread out all over Southeast Asia. Sailing everywhere in their magnificent perahus, they extended their influence to the Sulus, Borneo, the Moluccas, Java, Sumatra, Malaya and the Riaus, covering distances of over a thousand miles from their homeland in Sulawesi. The Bugis were shrewd traders and became deeply involved in the politics of the sultanates in Malaya and the Riaus. Through the Bugis Yam Tuan Muda in the Riaus, they controlled the Johore sultanate until the British arrived.

The exploits of the Daing brothers are legendary. Their descendants rule Selangor. The proud history of the Bugis people is an important part of the history of the Malay community in Singapore. For many years Singapore was the headquarters of Bugis trade in the western archipelago.

So also the story of the Minangkabau people from West Sumatra. They too were full of enterprise and adventure. When my wife and I visited Padang and Bukit Tinggi in 1987, we noticed very few Chinese. We were told that is because the Minangkabau people are able businessmen themselves, which is in fact their reputation all over Indonesia today. Eunus GRC is named after the well-known Malay writer and nationalist, Mohammed Eunus Abdullah. He was the son of a wealthy Minangkabau merchant.

My own constituency of Aljunied GRC is named after a well-known family of Arab traders who arrived in Singapore at the time of Raffles but who were established in Southeast Asia long before that.

The Malay community in Singapore is now a mixed community, not just Bugis and Minangkabau, but also Melayu, Javanese, Bawean, Arab, Indian Muslim and others. It is a community with a rich heritage. We must preserve this heritage for our own self-respect. The purpose is not to create artificial divisions between different groups of Singaporean Malays. The purpose is to give Singapore Malays the self-confidence to progress along with the other races in Singapore.

The different races of Singapore have different pasts. But we all share a common future as Singaporeans. With each year, the Malay community in Singapore becomes more distinct as a Singaporean community, and increasingly different from Malay communities elsewhere in Southeast Asia. This is natural. This is also true for the other races. The Chinese in Singapore are also different from the

Chinese in China and the Chinese in America. The Indians in Singapore are not the same as the Indians in India or the Indians in England. We have our own future and our own destiny.

We are proud to be independent Singaporeans. We are proud of the progress we have made. For Singaporean Malays, this progress shows itself in the growing number of middle-class Malay yuppies.

Malay yuppies have a particularly important role to play. They are better educated. They are more modern in their outlook. They can help strengthen leadership in the Malay community. Strong leadership is crucial for the social, cultural and economic progress of the Malay community in Singapore. We must make a special effort to induct more Malay yuppies into Majlis Pusat and other Malay organisations.

Malay yuppies are also important role-models for the youths of the community. We should hold up those who are successful as examples for others to follow. Whether in the professions, in business, in sports, in the arts, in whatever field, Malays who do well are an inspiration to the whole community. They show what is possible with discipline and hard work. Fandi Ahmad's achievement as a world-class footballer makes us all proud.

What we must do is to build on the indomitable spirit of enterprise and adventure which brought many of our forefathers here to Singapore many years ago. We are no longer talking about a Bugis spirit or a Minangkabau spirit. We are talking about a Singaporean Malay spirit which is modern, scientific and dynamic.

Majlis Pusat can help Malay Singaporeans achieve this goal. I congratulate Majlis Pusat for the good work it has done and wish it every success in the future.

Dengan itu saya dengan sukacita merasmikan pembukaan karnival ini. Terima kasih.

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