

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ON  
INTER-GOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE TALKS,  
KUALA LUMPUR ON 15TH APRIL, 1963

As Chairman of the Inter-Governmental Committee on Merger of Singapore with the Federation of Malaya, I have kept quiet for the last two days because it has been the agreed practice that at the end of a Conference we issue a joint statement agreed by both parties and neither side makes any further statement to the Press.

However, since the Prime Minister of Singapore has made a number of statements to the Press which were not quite accurate, I feel it is my duty to put things right in order to avoid any wrong impression of what took place at the Inter-Governmental Committee talks.

It is correct to say, as has been pointed by the Minister of Finance of the Federation, that when it was clear on the afternoon of Thursday, 11th April, that the talks were on the verge of breaking down it was the intention of the Federation Government to issue a full statement on the current negotiations for Merger between the Federation of Malaya and Singapore, so that the public might know the position reached so far.

It was at the personal plea of the Prime Minister of Singapore to me that we agreed to resume the talks that afternoon, and at the end of that discussion to issue only a bare statement announcing the resumption of the talks this week in an effort to find a solution.

I should make it clear that the proposals put forward in the Inter-Governmental Committee are the proposals of the Federation Government, which works on the principle of collective responsibility. It is, therefore, not right for the Prime Minister of Singapore and for the Singapore Government to single out the Federation

Minister of Finance for attack as if these were his personal proposals, as he has put them forward on behalf of and with the full support of the Government.

The Singapore Government, in an official statement, has now practically accused the Federation Minister of Finance, which means in effect the Federation Government, of trying to go back on the Singapore White Paper. This is completely untrue and it is not the practice of the Federation Government to go back on its word, written or unwritten.

It is, perhaps, inappropriate at this juncture for the Federation Government to explain its stand, which has been consistent and which will be fair to the needs of both Singapore and the future Central Government of Malaysia, bearing in mind the vital need to have a strong Central Government.

This principle has been accepted in the exchange of letters between the two Prime Ministers. One of the essential prerequisites of a strong Central Government is that it should have adequate financial powers and resources.