

Written Representation 27

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The Clerk of Parliament
Singapore

By Email: selectcommittee@parliament.gov.sg

SELECT COMMITTEE

I welcome setting of Select Committee. This will give the public an opportunity to improve the legislation. I must declare my interest at the outset. I am a Council Member of Inter Religious Organization ("IRO") which represents 10 religion in Singapore. I am a former member of Hindu Endowments Board. The submission is personal. It does not represent the view of IRO or any other institutions.

I wish to confine my submission to three areas, race, religion and language. Three issues are emotive and has caused great disharmony in many parts of the world.

I remember in one country, linguistic supporters killed themselves in name of language.

I have seen three riots in Singapore and at least two of them were caused by rumour. Rumour sometimes takes the form of reality till it is exposed and abolished. In this age of internet any false news can lead to great harm in a highly intensive housing community like Singapore. In any block of HDB, we may have all the religious practice in Singapore.

It is therefore important that we guard against any false news.

When the Bill for Religious Harmony was being constituted by the committee I supported it and because of this piece of legislation, we are assured of continuous religious harmony. We cannot take religious harmony for granted.

Some religious groups were against the law but time has proven that it was the right move by Parliament.

I do not think that the penal code is a strong deterrence. We must try to create a new law or convention similar to religious harmony law.

I remember some 50 years ago at the registration of national servicemen, because rumour some Malay recruits started rioting. I stand corrected. Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew had to go to the Registration Center and calm the situation.

I give you another example.

At one Thaipusam celebration in Serangoon Road in front of one of the Hindu temple, some youths were criticising the Hindu religion. This upsets some Hindu youths. We managed to calm the situation.

I hope and pray that the Select Committee set up a proper legal framework to resolves the matter.

I end by referring to Ramayana. Trust is the highest form of dharma. All religion will support truth against falsehood.

I am willing to appear before the Committee if need be.

Shriniwas Rai

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