

Speech by Mr. S. Ramaswamy, Parliamentary Secretary (Law) and M.P. for Petang Pasir at the Petang Pasir Constituency 5th National Day Celebration Dinner on Friday, 7th August, 1970 at 7.00 p.m. at the Bennett Community Centre

I am glad to be able to participate in this evening's celebrations by constituents of Petang Pasir to mark our Republic's 5th National Day.

When Singapore first became an independent state in 1965, many people honestly thought that it was the end of the road. Having no natural resources of its own, with considerable domestic problems of its own, this line of thought was understandable. In fact if we look at the post-war history of constitutional developments, we will realize that many used to think that Singapore could never make it as an independent state, run its own affairs and solve its own problems. They felt that Singapore needed the wider resources of a Federal arrangement in order to survive.

In 1965 when Singapore had to be the master of its own destiny, it was rough going all the way. Then came the unexpected - the withdrawal of the British Bases by 1971. Now Singapore made full use of the time available to build up her economic and defence systems as a demonstration of how a small nation can, by sheer determination and the resilience of its Government and people, survive and prosper.

Economic growth has topped 8 per cent during the last five years. Shipping tonnage, consumption of electricity, Government revenues, bank deposits - all these economic indicators are on the upward trend. Today the average Singaporean is twice as well off as his counterpart 10 or 11 years ago.

All these demonstrate that given awareness and identification of national problems, given the whole-hearted backing of the people, given a leadership that is not afraid to prescribe the right remedies and take tough measures in the national interest, Singapore can continue to maintain progress for the next 100 years and more. In all programmes of national development, be it trade, housing, education, anti-pollution measures and so on, we must carry the people with us - in short, the Government must have popular support. Within this framework, we need leaders who are able, honest, enlightened, dedicated and who are also modernizers and innovators.

The next stage of Singapore's social transformation promises to be more exciting than ever. Improved living will and can be made

available to all sectors of society. The concept of gracious living for all is possible provided Singapore continues to modernise and progress.

While the good things of life are being made available to all, we must not be complacent. We have to be alert all the time, particularly in view of the happenings within the region. Outside Singapore, things are not that easy and comfortable. In South-east Asia today, energies and resentments are in permanent ferment. As a result, many countries are denied the opportunity to mobilise popular support for constructive endeavours.

The external situation is a reminder that we in Singapore have to think harder, work harder, and consolidate our defence and security. Being small, external conditions have a relatively more severe impact on Singapore. Hence, we have to plan systematically and make the most of our resources. We cannot afford to have chaos and disorder if we want to continue to survive and prosper.

I have no doubt that Singaporeans will continue to give of their best and help maintain ever-improving progress and prosperity for all in our multi-racial society and that we can celebrate National Days in the future with ever increasing confidence.

AUGUST 7, 1970.
