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MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
FOR CEYLANG EAST, AT THE 12TH ANNIVERSARY NATIONAL DAY
DINNER AT SIMS AVENUE COMMUNITY CENTRE ON SATURDAY ON
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The recession has hit the economies of many countries during the past few years. Its ill-effects are still being felt. Unemployment is rampant and economic growth sluggish. The era of double digit growth in GNP seems to have faded. On top of it, more and more industrial countries are practising protectionism to keep out imports of their less developed countries. The resultant impact on developing countries which depend almost entirely on exports for survival will become more severe. The unemployment situation will be further aggravated thus giving rise to greater social problems and tension. The general outlook is, therefore, grim. Indeed, the indications are that things may become worse before they get better. This is going to be the trend for the next few years.

We are rather fortunate in that our country has not fared too badly because of the various measures undertaken to cushion the effects of recession and inflation following the oil crisis in 1973. This is the positive aspect of our economy. The negative side is that with growing affluence, most Singaporeans tend to take things for granted inspite of the present economic difficulties facing the world. It is timely to remind ourselves that the indicators of economic growth show a slowing down. This means that our erstwhile high expectations must necessarily be lowered to avoid dissapointment. Slow economic growth and unemployment will continue to plague the world for several years to come. We, in Singapore, cannot escape the effects of this development which will affect us directly.

The young Singaporeans, in particular, do not consciously plan and save for the future. What they earn they spend. They hop jobs for the sake of a few dollars more. There is no firm commitment to the job band. Even the unemployed youths are fussy and choosy about jobs and expect to work in cool comfortable surrounding with good pay. They shy away from hard labour which involves the use of hands and exposure to the weather. They prefer to wait and do nothing till something good comes by.

That is why we have to employ foreign labourers on work permits to do the jobs for which our youths have no inclinations. This is a very unhealthy attitude and must be checked forthwith. Teachers, parents and community leaders can help shape the attitude of youths and instill proper work ethics among them. This is a contribution which they can make for the betterment of our society.

It is also timely to remind our youths that Singapore, founded 158 years ago, has grown from a fishing village on a mangrove swamp to a bustling city state of 2.2 million people not by accident. The transformation has been made possible through the ingenuity, enterprise and hard work of the people involving tremendous sacrifices. The youths must reorientate themselves and try to emulate the fine example set in order to lead a more meaningful life and contribute positively to society. In this way, our continued progress, prosperity and survival can be assured for generations to come.

There is no substitute for hard work. The good things in life do not just happen accidentally to our favour. This is the message I want to pass on to our youths.

I wish you success in your endeavours.