

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT**MC. AU. 59/63 (PM)****TEXT OF SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER,****MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT MALAYSIA SOLIDARITY DAY MASS****RALLY AND MARCH-PAST ON THE PADANG****ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 31, 1963.**

In the history of a nation, there are moments when great decisions have to be made. Today is such a moment in our history. Had we wavered in a moment of stress, then we would have lost our place in history, and Malaysia would be just another name for a collection of 10-million Malays, Dyaks, Dusuns, Muruts, Chinese, Indians, Pakistanis, Ceylonese and others, brought together by an accident of British colonial domination of this part of the world.

We have shown in our struggle against colonial domination that we are not merely a conglomeration, and inarticulate and incoherent conglomeration,

of just so many races. We have the will and the wherewithal to be a nation in our own right. That is the right that we the people of Singapore today proclaim.

But for a twist of history, we would be proclaiming Malaysia today together with Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak. Now Malaysia is to be proclaimed formally on September 16. Nevertheless August 31 has been made a significant date in the history of Malaysia. All Federal powers in Sabah and Sarawak will be reposed in the Governors. In Singapore on the same principle, all Federal powers over defence and external affairs will, as from today till September 16, be reposed in our Yang di-Pertuan Negara. We look upon ourselves as trustees for the Central Government of Malaysia in these 15 days. We will exercise these powers in the interests of Malaysia. And in accordance with the Malaysian Agreement signed in London July 8, the Defence arrangements have for all practical purposes come into operation.

National Archives of Singapore

If the decision was for us alone, our choice may well have been different. But Malaysia is the collective decision of the four partners. And the paramount condition is for the solidarity and unity of the various partners. If we are not to falter and fail, then we must press ahead in unity.

There will be no change in the overall power situation, or in the policy of the Government during this fortnight of prelude to Malaysia. This proclamation today is an assertion of our right to freedom.

Our act follows the traditions of the great anti-colonial revolutions in Asia. The only difference is, I hope, that unlike the French or worse, the Dutch, the British are a more pragmatic people. So they concede the inexorable, and hope that by withdrawing from an already untenable position, they can become friends with those over whom they once were masters. But let us not deceive ourselves, and believe that they do this for reasons of altruistic charity. But their enlightened self-interest makes our transition to freedom that much easier.

On our part we welcome friends from this, and indeed, from any other part of the world.

National Archives of Singapore

We have proclaimed our inalienable right to be free – free from colonial domination, in a manner of our choice. We have a right to say to the world that we do not wish to change masters. When on September 16 we take the formal step towards Malaysia, we hope others will respect this collective decision freely made. The 16th of September is final and irrevocable, and we

have agreed with the Federation Government that our delegates will be present at the United Nations General Assembly on September 17 as part of the Malaysia delegation.

A nation is great not by its size alone. It is the will, the cohesion, the stamina, the discipline of its people and the quality of their leaders which ensures it an honourable place in history. By Asian standards, Malaysia is a small nation. But let no one doubt the will, cohesion, endurance and the discipline of her people, and let no one misjudge the resolve of her leaders.

The Tunku is a man of peace. We support him to stand up and fight unreservedly for Malaysia. The biggest compliment history can pay him is to record that by his agreement to postpone the official date for Malaysia for 15 days, the rest of the Afro-Asian world will be on our side when the United Nations Secretary-General affirms that Malaysia is the free will of our four territories.

We have witnessed the end of an era, an era where we had lived sheltered from the change, chaos and revolutions of South East Asia. A period of great trial lies ahead. But the future also holds great promise, promise of peace, stability and prosperity if we have the resolve, the stamina and the wisdom to

meet the challenge that lies ahead. How we the people of Singapore and the rest of Malaysia conduct ourselves, and what the leaders of the four territories decide in the crucial months ahead will determine the shape of things to come. Never let our future generations look back at this moment of history and say that their forbears and their leaders when tried were found wanting.

The course of history is never easy and straight for emerging nations. Who could have foreseen two years ago when the Tunku announced the concept of Malaysia, that events would move so swiftly. Who indeed could have foreseen that Singapore condemned by all the prophets of doom as the centre of trouble and tribulation of the three new partners in Malaysia has turned out to be the one in which there is finality, stability and prosperity.

We the people of Singapore have made our contribution in the fight for Malaysia. We fought every inch of the way over the last two years against those who are out to wreck our new nation. We fought our enemies in Singapore, in South-East Asia, and in Moshi before the Afro-Asian nations, and at the United Nations before the world forum. We will go on fighting for what we know to be right and just. And right will triumph.

In 15 days we will raise officially the new flag of the nation. Three points have been added to the star of Malaysia. Let us resolve that the one point representing Singapore will always add lustre and strength to Malaysia. If we live up to our convictions, we will stand the test and judgment of history.

There are moments in the life of a people when what is required is firmness and certainty. To dither is to invite disaster. Now firmness and certainty have been restored. Today, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore take one step forward towards freedom.

On the 16th we go on with Malaysia and we will survive, and prosper and flourish. If we are friendly to our neighbours, fair in our dealings with them and firm on our right to live in peace, unmolested in our own country.

National Archives of Singapore

31st August, 1963.

(Time issued : 1930 hours)