

PRIME MINISTER`S SPEECH AT THE 5TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION OF THE YIO CHU KANG COMMUNITY CENTRE
ON THE 18TH DECEMBER, 1965 (SUMMARY)

In his speech, the Prime Minister said Singapore must fully prepare itself in all respects.

It had not wanted independence, but now that it was independent, Mr, Lee said, "We have to consider very carefully every aspect. This is a new situation and therefore, new measures must be adopted".

The Prime Minister said the present tasks were first, to stabilise Singapore`s position by being prepared in every day. But, he said, "We must base every move of ours on the basis of long-term planning. We must not think in terms of the next two years or of the next elections. We must look ten, twenty years ahead."

The people of Singapore and Malaysia were inseparably linked as were their destinies; but since the Malaysian Government had wanted it "this way", "We have to accept it for the time being". But this did not mean that we would stand aside and watch if anything happened on the other side. If your people

meet with difficulties, you must render help. But, it was our sincere hope that nothing would happen. At the same time, the Prime Minister said, "We must make long-term plans".

Singapore, the Prime Minister said, would be able to solve its economic problems within the next 2 to 3 years. Since economically, a common market was not possible, we would look in other directions. "There is no problem about our trade at present". Mr. Lee said. Even in the matter of our water-supply, the Government had plans to deal with the matter. Said Mr. Lee: "Things will be done, step by step. And, after 5, 10 years, we will be more prosperous than ever, compared with our neighbours."

The Prime Minister said, "The most important thing is our defence". It was a simple question of survival or being destroyed by others. He said, "If we want to survive and not be destroyed by others, then we must unite and be prepared to fight to defend ourselves."

Mr. Lee stated that he had never said that Singapore was expanding its volunteers to defend Malaysia. (He was referring to a speech made recently by the Malaysian Prime Minister, Tengku Abdul Rahman at Johore Bahru). Said Mr. Lee: "Our volunteers are to defend only our country; only Singapore."

During the 2 years that we were in Malaysia, only 140 youths out of a total of 40,000 who had registered for national service in Singapore were called for training. How can we defend our country with this number? We have now to train 10,000 to 20,000 of our own citizens. They are reliable and loyal to our country. We want a build up a multi-racial army to defend our multi-racial society.”

The Prime Minister said it was most important to train Singapore`s young men and women so that they would be a vigorous, effective generation with the guts and the will to act, with the energy and the discipline to defend the country. If, in every community centre there was a group of physically fit, able, intelligent young people who would be given special training so that they could be effective members of society, we would be able to establish our position in South-East Asia. And, Mr. Lee concluded:

National Archives of Singapore

"If we are a united, tolerant, and multi-racial society, our future will be very bright."

In his speech (which was delivered in Hokkien) the Prime Minister also referred to the British bases in Singapore. The bases, he said, were necessary for the protection of Singapore against aggression. And Singapore had the means of

preventing the bases from being used for the purposes of aggression against Singapore`s friendly neighbours. But, Mr. Lee warned, Singapore would suffer if it was not fully prepared for the possibility of the British withdrawing in 10 or 15 years in the event of their thinking it not worthwhile to maintain the bases.

On the Barisan Sosialis boycott of Parliament, Mr. Lee said that it was because they were afraid of the open debate in Parliament. It was obvious that the Communists both in Singapore and Malaysia had failed because their analysis had been wrong. The Communists had tried to make use of Chinese sentiments for their purposes but they had, instead been isolated. Said the Prime Minister, "We advocated (on the other hand) a multi-racial society -- equal and just, a type of society supported by all countries in the world... We are not Communist or anti-Communist, but non-Communist... We want a democratic and equal society where every citizen regardless of race, language or religion, is equal."

National Archives of Singapore

It was not the Communists that some people were afraid of, but of parties with such a policy.

The Prime Minister also said that it was not size of country and population that mattered but the quality of a people. In the SEAP Games, for example,

Singapore had, to date, won among the highest number of "golds" for a nation of its size and number when compared with the other competitors.

National Archives of Singapore