

**TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH MADE BY THE**  
**PRIME MINISTER AT THE BRAS BASAH ROAD COMMUNITY**  
**CENTRE ON 11<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 1966, TO CELEBRATE THE**  
**FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF NATIONAL DAY.**

Friends and Fellow Citizens,

This is a constantly changing and forward-moving society.

Three years ago, almost to a day, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August, 1963, I was here ... There is probably a plaque somewhere in one of the community centres here ... And, in the three years, the world has changed. Singapore has changed and, most important, you and I not only have grown older, but our thoughts, our thinking has changed. As the world around us changes, so we change to meet this new situation.

I am concerned really not with tomorrow – not the immediate tomorrow, because I think for five, probably ten years, there is enough momentum. We are a community that has one virtue: it is prepared to work and pay for what it wants – which is a great help.

Ours is not that kind of society.

True, we are a small community of two million. But, there are smaller communities. Malta has only 375,000 people. And never forget: every one of our two million people, particularly the younger people ... As I was saying in Hokkien just now: I was more interested during Tuesday's parade in the younger generation – in the teenagers, the cadets, the young boys and girls marching and dancing – than I was in the soldiers. There were ministers marching, too. And this is necessary and it is part of the verve, the mettle of the people that when we ask you to fight for your survival, we are prepared to fight with you; and not ask you to fight for me.

But, we know that there will be really no big trouble for five, ten years by which time my colleagues – who are now over 30 – will be over 40 and too old. You cannot run in and out of trenches or fire missiles when you are over 40! It is very difficult business.

I was more interested in the young boys and girls who were marching and dancing because when they come of age, that is the time when we are likely to meet real trouble if they are not ready because they are going to face a very

troublesome world, made more troublesome because we are more hard-working and likely to be more successful .....

Life is like that. The person next door sees that you have a television set; a brand new car, a new suit; and baskets of beautiful fruit on your table. He does not think of the hours of hard-work that you have put in to acquire these things. All he says is, "Why don't I have them too?" Then he looks for a big stick and an iron bar and a bicycle chain and bearing-scraper and he says, "One day, I'll pinch them"... It regularly happens all over the world.

There are many ways of countering such a situation. You can hire another gang with bearing-scrappers and bicycle chains and crowbars. But that is not a permanent solution. Because you get blackmailed. You pay this person so that the other fellow will not beat you up. This chap then says to you, "You better pay me more or I will get him to beat you up." So that finally, you say, "Right, I will be as good at the crowbar and the bicycle chain as you are. Then we will take you on"!

In this modern age, it is not numbers that are important. You try and fly a supersonic jet aeroplane. It is not like driving a motor-car. I am assured every time I read through aviation magazines about the kind of people who are required

to man modern navies, air forces and armies. You think you can fire a missile? A ground-to-air missile? We start with ground-to-air first: we are a peace-loving people, wanting to defend ourselves. You think you can look down the barrel of the missile and look at the aeroplane and fire it? Do you know enough calculus, trigonometry, electronics? Have you been educated? Have you been to school? Do you know how to work the slide-rule, the logarithm? Can you think faster than the other person? Can you think fast enough to work the electronics that now goes with part of modern weaponry?

So our one young man that we train – if we give him the guts and the gusto plus the knowledge – he can be equal to ten other fellows. In ten years' time, we will have three million people; that means they will be equal to 30 million other people. So, you see, I do not believe that we have no future. We must work hard and really build up a generation which is not only sophisticated, not only good at making money, creating art, science, culture, but which has the vitality and vigour to fight for its place in this part of the world and to take on all-comers.

Other people have done it.

There are 4½ million Fins in Finland, and they face 200 million Russians and they are not Communists. They are Fins and not Russians. The Swiss also

have done it. Seven million Swiss are cornered by 70 million Germans, 50 million Frenchmen, 60 million Italians. But they are Swiss. And there are 2,700,000 Israelis surrounded by 200 million Arabs, and no Arab State does business with Israel. They have boycotted here; and Israeli ships and Israeli goods cannot go through the Suez Canal. So every time you eat a Jaffa orange, remember that that orange probably went through the Mediterranean, passed Gibraltar and then went round the Cape of Good Hope and came to Singapore.

And, when I went to Eastern Europe in quite a number of countries on the table were Jaffa oranges, and I thought, "What a resourceful people!"

We are not as badly off as the Israelis. True, we are not as modernised as the Israelis are. They are a very modern people. But we will learn. And, in 20 years' time, we will breed a generation equal to none in this part of the world.

None will match the vitality, the vigour and the tightness of organisation. And, in that way, we ensure our survival.

But ultimately, the most important thing is: to seek enduring peace, to seek a future. And our future is best secured not by trying to run a Chinese society.

It would have been very easy if we had wanted to do that 75 percent are Chinese, and we could say, “All right, we will assimilate the others. We will make every Indian, every Ceylonese, every Eurasian, every Malay a Chinese. Make them learn Chinese; make them forget themselves.” But then, you are looking for real trouble. And I would not try it: it is not possible. And yet I hear other people trying to make the Chinese something else which I think is a very futile, senseless effort. It is not possible.

I was recently in Bulgaria and ... You know, the Bulgars – a Slav-speaking people – were for 500 years dominated by the Ottoman Empire, a Muslim empire. And, at the end of the 500 years, they emerged still Bulgars and still Slav-speaking.

We must have tolerance, be forbearing and have respect for one another.

But most important, make sure that you have the wherewithal so that the other person will respect you. It is when you have not the wherewithal that you have to plead for equality and respect. The day you have the sinews, the economic foundation, the closely-knit social organisation plus the vitality and vigour and the strength of a modern equipped society, that day is the day we can be friendly and we can be equal, and respect will be mutual.

Let us not waste time. Let us use the time the way we have used it in the first year.

Since August last year to August this year, we have obtained more credit points.

And in the second year let us build on what we have achieved in the first year. So for the third year, fourth year, fifth year. And, at the end of five years when we hold a parade in the Padang, if we have done our job, then all the little boys and girls – the teenagers – will be in their early 20's and robust, vigorous, virile, rugged. Then your future is safe. And, if we do not do that, then we deserve to perish, and all that you have built – from your gardens to your fountains to your best harbour in Asia to the best housing estates anywhere in Asia – all that will be lost. Other people who have not put in a spot of work will just come in with guns and they will say, "Clear out; I am staying here!" If you do not want that to happen, make sure now that it never happens.

And remember: the destiny of a people is determined not by the size of its population or the girth of its territory. It is the quality of a people, that tremendous reservoir of stamina and vitality and determination that makes a

people fight on under very difficult, sometimes indomitable, odds. And we are such a people in Southeast Asia.

We have gone through a lot over the last ten years and, in spite of riots, commotion, tumultuous changes, all the time this place has surged forward; never backwards.

Last year, despite the difficulties after separation, we continued to use our hands: buildings went up; schools went up; clinics went up. Roads were built; fountains were built; imports and exports went up, income tax went up. In other words, income went up; the sum total of wealth in the community went up by ten percent; our population went up by 2.4. That is something.

There are other countries in the world where the population goes up 4 percent in one year and the income goes up only by 2 percent. So, you are getting poorer every year. But we are not.

Make up our minds to make sure that this is ours for all time. The young man claps. He does not know why. But we must make sure that he has no reason to feel sorry that the generation ahead of him let him down.



Make up our minds that we will stand here and dig our toes in, and build a robust society that will take on any rocks that will come. And ultimately, the group with the stamina, with the grit and the determination must win. If we do not have the stamina and the grit, then we deserve to lose. But I do not believe that you have not got it, nor do I believe that I cannot together with you do it. And it is because I am quite confident that we can do it that I am doing what I am doing. Otherwise, what I am doing makes no sense, and becomes a waste of time. Three meetings in a night; you eating, I talking. Three times I have done this tonight. This is not the ordinary man's idea of fun.

But I do not find it a drudgery because if I were not doing this, I would be sitting back with a great deal of heartburn wondering why we are letting time pass when we could use that time to do something effective.

And I want you to leave here tonight feeling a little different inside, different in the sense that you know that this time we are playing for keeps and that if we lose, then we lose everything: it is finished.

If we lose, a hundred years from now people will come here, tourists will come and say, "Once upon a time, they flourished here a remarkable community! What happened to them, I really don't know. But something happened; they

cracked up; they collapsed; they were emasculated and destroyed and absorbed.”

And I am sure you do not want that to happen.

So I say: toughen up, build up an enduring future.

Thank you.

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