

SPEECH BY TUAN HAJI SHA'ARI TADIN, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (CULTURE) AND MP FOR KAMPONG CHAI CHEE AT THE OPENING OF THE "PRODUCTIVITY IS OUR BUSINESS" EXHIBITION AT KAMPONG CHAI CHEE COMMUNITY CENTRE ON FRIDAY,  
7 AUGUST 1975 AT 7.30 PM.

I should like first of all to express my thanks to the People's Association and the Katong District Office and of course the Chairman and Members of the Working Committee for organising and making today's exhibition possible at my personal request. Although it has been pointed out that such an exhibition will not go down very well because of it being too technical in nature. I still think it will benefit our people especially our young workers, who are presently working at the Rollei, NMB, and other factories. Nothing is better explained the importance of productivity than to bring the exhibition before them so that they will be able to understand what it is all about.

The keen competition in export markets, the falling of purchasing power, the rising wage costs and the decline in industrial and business activities because of reduced demand and high costs - all these factors cause most economies in the world to suffer slower growth.

Our economy has its share of these buffetings. But, we have managed to weather the storm and to attain a real growth of 6.8 per cent in our GDP in 1974. This is not a bad record considering the rather depressing economic situation the world was facing. Things are slowly picking up now although difficulties still abound.

Nonetheless, in such a situation of economic recession and inflation, our industries would have to produce at lower cost per unit of output. This would enable them to price their products cheaply, which in turn would help to check inflation and would also bring their products a more competitive edge in the world market.

With increased demand for their products, industries could expand production and thus take in more workers. As more and more people are employed, then the demands for goods and services will also increase. And thus the cycle goes. This attempt at producing at lower costs is what is meant by increasing productivity, and this is our key weapon in combating inflation and recession.

One of the means towards higher productivity is to ensure that the work force are proficient in the skills needed to do their jobs efficiently. Furthermore, to prevent obsolescence, these skills have to be continuously upgraded by re-training and development.

Yet, despite the obvious, many management relegate staff training and development to a level of scant significance. This is clearly manifested in the reaction of management to recession and high material costs and thus the need to trim expenses and cut down costs. One of the first items to be affected is the staff development programmes. For some reasons management failed to realise that the present slow-down of business activities affords them a good opportunity to develop the skills of their staff and to equip them for better times ahead which must ultimately come.

However, the unfortunate thing is that even in times of economic boom and expanding business, management are also slow in implementing staff development programmes. The common reasons given are work pressure and tight production schedules. One can see from here that in both lean and boom times, management would not consider staff training and development as a matter of major concern.

It is universally acknowledged that an enterprise with the best technology and equipment would go nowhere if there are no skilled and competent personnel to work them effectively.

Staff's skilfulness and competency are largely acquired through training, whether on the job or in specialised institutions.

n It is management's own interest to adopt as a matter of priority the training and re-training of its staff to provide them with higher skills. This is an investment which will yield them high dividends. Workers themselves should seize such opportunities when offered and strive diligently to improve their expertise.

Only in this way can we be assured that the people factor is ready to fully exploit the vast potential present in the technology and machineries that are available to us.

Productivity and training are both our concern. To neglect them would be to throw away the key to our prosperity and well-being.

I have now great pleasure in declaring the exhibition open.