

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

MC.JN.11/64(ISTANA)

SPEECH BY H.E. THE YANG DI-PERTUAN NEGARA, TUN YUSOF BIN ISHAK, ON TELEVISION RADIO SINGAPORE, ON NATIONAL DAY, 3RD JUNE, 1964, AT 6.05 P.M.

We are celebrating National Day for the fifth year in succession. But the context in which we are celebrating it today is significantly different from that of past years. Today, for the first time, we observe National Day not against a Singapore setting but against a Malaysian setting. As though to give emphasis to the Malaysian implications of National Day, June 3rd is also the birthday of His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong. This coincidence of two events is a happy one, for His Majesty is also a symbol of the unity and integrity of Malaysia.

The essential idea behind National Day is to give a sense of common destiny to a society composed of many races, languages, religions and cultures. This ideal has not lost its validity or purpose by virtue of Singapore having become an integral part of an independent Malaysia.

Though the objective remains unaltered - the fact that this unity has to be forged within a Malaysian context adds new complexities to our problem of nation building. There is now a greater diversity of races, languages and cultures to be accommodated within a national framework. The disruptive tendencies of racism, cultural chauvinism, religious bigotry, provincialism and "stateism" are correspondingly increased.

It will not be easy for us to learn to submerge communal loyalties and local interests for the sake of broader Malaysian interests. Easy or not we must learn to think of ourselves as Malaysians first because the only worthwhile future for us is a Malaysian future. The alternative to a Malaysian future is to become the appendage of hostile countries infused with dreams of building new empires cut out of the ashes of empires recently vanished.

In other words if we do not make a conscious attempt to become Malaysians of our own free will, then there are others waiting to forcibly absorb us into their new order of things. There are false prophets in our midst who try to corrode our will to be Malaysians by inviting each of the states in Malaysia to go their separate and independent ways.

Fortunately for us, the peoples of Malaysia have rejected these false prophets. In free elections in Sabah, Sarawak, Singapore and Malaya the peoples have overwhelmingly opted for a Malaysian future.

As a result political integration has taken place to some extent within Malaysia. This integration is, however, formal. But we need something much deeper than the formal institutions of a central parliament, a national administrative machine or even the threat of a common danger from outside to create a Malaysian consciousness.

We need an emotional integration of the peoples of Malaysia. We have to become aware despite our wonderful diversity that we all belong to Malaysia and that Malaysia belongs to us; that we have to live and die here because we have no other homes and no other loyalties. We must learn to lay stress not on the things which divide us - our race, our religion, our language and our individual cultures - but on those things which unite us. So long as we or our leaders exploit racial, religious and cultural differences as means of consolidating hold over particular communities then Malaysian nationalism will be a thing in name only.

We must grow out of the narrow groves of communalism and state provincialism if we are to serve well the Malaysia that we have brought into being.

National Day, this year, is an affirmation by the peoples of Singapore of their faith in a Malaysian destiny; of their conviction that there is no future for them and their children outside of Malaysia.

I would also like to take this opportunity, on your behalf, to wish long life and happiness to His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

I would also like to express to you my appreciation for the splendid spirit of calm and solidarity you have all shown in the face of internal threats and external pressures exerted upon us into abandoning Malaysia.

A small nation like Malaysia cannot develop sufficient military strength of its own to protect itself. It must rely on powerful friends and on a sympathetic world opinion. And most important of all a show of national unity and resolve can act as a restraint on those who threaten to crush us.

JUNE 3rd 1964.

(Time issued: 1000 hours)

National Archives of Singapore