

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

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TEXT OF SPEECH OF THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR, MR. JEK YEUN THONG, AT THE OPENING OF THE FIRST EXHIBITION OF "MEN'S WEAR" AND FASHION SHOW BY THE MERCHANTS TAILORS ASSOCIATION AT THE VICTORIA MEMORIAL HALL ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22ND, AT 5 P.M.

Independence brings with it new responsibilities and new challenges. The greatest of these is the ability to improve the living standards of the people. Political and economic stability can only be achieved if this challenge is well handled.

One of the important tasks of your government is to diversify our economy because we can no longer depend on our entrepot trade alone.

Our first step has been to attract foreign capital to start industries in Singapore. Our success has exceeded our expectations - our industrial estates at Kallang, Redhill and Jurong bear testimony to the faith others have in our ability to provide the right atmosphere for industrialisation.

However, although a large section of our labour force will be eventually absorbed by these industrial projects, there are others who by inclination and talent are best suited for other types of work. Other avenues of absorbing them have to be found. Our duty is to create more jobs for the people so that they can earn a decent living and share in the prosperity of our society.

Singapore's cosmopolitan population with their diversity in culture and way of life; the attraction of shopping in a free port; our premiere position on the sea and air routes of the world; the famed hospitality and graciousness of our population - all these and many other factors have made us a natural stopover for the international tourists, 109,720 of whom stayed in Singapore for more than one day last year. There were also 72,107 through passengers by sea who spent on an average of twenty-four hours in port.

If each of them spent an average of \$110 on shopping they would have infused about \$20,000,000 into our economy.

No doubt the tailors of Singapore had a share of this \$20,000,000 but could have a large share. This then is your challenge for the coming years. You should set your aim at having every male tourist in 1965 leave with at least one suit costing approximately \$120. If 50% of the 181,827 visitors who visited us in 1963 were men, this would mean \$11,000,000 worth of business for the tailors of Singapore. This will mean more income for our tailors and other small traders who are not so well off in the community. Your

government is a government which believes in socialist principles. We are more concerned in the raising of the standard of living of poorer people.

Tailoring is indeed big business and our neighbour Hong Kong has capitalised on it. You are no doubt aware of the publicity she has given to this source of income.

There is no reason why the tailors of Singapore should not do likewise. You have the talent, the expertise and the same desire to please - the same qualities which your Hong Kong brethren have. I have received reports that you can capture part of the Hong Kong market if there is enough publicity overseas.

However, two prime considerations should be given in your campaign - maintenance of high standards in quality and workmanship, and competitive prices. In the first category, you must never think that because a tourist is in transit he is fair game for cheating. You can have no better publicity than a well cut suit worn by a satisfied customer. In this respect tailors in Singapore should get together and set minimum standards.

On the question of prices, remember the old maxim / a that it is better to make a little profit on a large turnover. In this you must win the co-operation of your workers. Share your prosperity with them and seek their co-operation in keeping the prices as competitive as those in Hong Kong.

It is heartening therefore to note that the Merchant Tailors' Association is holding an exhibition of men's wear to-day. We have seen many women's fashion shows in Singapore, but this is the first time we have a fashion show and exhibition for men's wear in Singapore. It was wrong to believe that only the fairer sex needs properly dressed. If we can enable everyone in our society to live properly, eat properly and dress properly, we have achieved something in life. You must be congratulated for taking the initiative of bringing the attention of the male public as to how they can be well dressed at reasonable prices. We hope that it will also draw the attention of those dealing with tourists to the fact that our tailors are up-to-date and your work is at par with those in any part of the world.

It is my sincere wish that this fine exhibition of men's wear will be repeated every year, and the scope of exhibition will grow bigger and bigger in time to come.

I hope that your exhibition will in fact help you in this task and be the first step towards increasing the income of not only of your members but also of Singapore.

I now have pleasure in declaring this exhibition open.

OCTOBER 22nd, 1964.

(Time issued: 1500 hours)