

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

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Speech by Mr. Lee Kuan Yew at Thong Hoe Village on 26.2.66 at the opening of the Chua Chu Kang Branch of the Citizens' Consultative Committee.

The Prime Minister spoke recently to members of the Citizens' Consultative Committee of Chua Chu Kang. The meeting had been arranged a few months before and was not directly connected with the coming by-elections.

The Prime Minister said that what was important was to mobilise and organise the resources of talent and energy in Singapore. He stated that the mass of the people now understood the practical issues which we are facing. We are living in a turbulent region in S.E. Asia. We cannot afford not to be practical and watchful of developments in Indonesia, for example.

Some leaders of neighbouring countries seemed worried about the sacking of the Indonesian Minister of Defence by President Sukarno. Their anxiety was natural because such events in Indonesia have their implications for all in the region Mr. Lee said. Singapore must make great effort to build a multi-racial society based on the principles of equality and justice.

Singapore's position was not better than that of last year and, if things went on smoothly, it would be in a stronger and more stable position by 1967.

And, Mr. Lee stressed: "We cannot give way on the vital principle of a multi-racial society based on equality; on the matter of Singapore's sovereignty and the safeguarding of our people's interests".

But, the Prime Minister pointed out: "We must try to avoid having unnecessary conflicts with neighbouring countries. We have to be reasonable and patient so that they may not be precipitated in their responses."

The Prime Minister referred to the events which had recently taken place in Nigeria, Ghana and a few other African countries. These, he said, reflected the instability of some newly emerging countries, an instability springing from lack of national cohesion and stable social patterns of authority, and a well established political structure of government.

Mr. Lee said that independent Singapore must heed these developments even though at present there was no question of a similar thing taking place here. Coups were usually initiated by army leaders in a situation where they feel confident they can get away with it and the people will submit to their new order.

Everyone in Singapore had a part to play in helping to organise the republic. Young people could help defend the country, and those with experience and in positions of influence had a duty to enlighten the people on our problems and give a lead to public thinking.

The Prime Minister also said: "In 1966, we must deal with our economic and other problems. The government and trading circles have their responsibilities but each citizen has also a part to play.

If we are to gain access to world markets, our industrialists and businessmen will have to take up the challenge of producing superior quality products which can compete with those of other countries. This is a matter of survival for us. And, if everyone thoroughly understands it, our success will be so much more assured. Grit and stamina are characteristics of the people of Singapore.

The fate of a people depends on two important factors; first, cohesion in society between the political leadership and the ground and the efficacy of the machinery of government; and second, upon the capacity of the people for sustained effort under trying conditions. If our people have these qualities, we will succeed.

In an advisory committee, the Prime Minister said that in the past few years there had been no representative in Chua Chu Kang and a few other constituencies to serve the people. But the citizen consultative committee had done a good job looking after the constituency needs. He hoped they would continue to work conscientiously for the improvement of conditions in Chua Chu Kang.

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