

President's Address  
at the Opening of Parliament  
6th May, 1968  
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Honourable Members,

We are met today after a general election in which 51 Honourable Members were returned unopposed and the rest, seven from the same party, returned with clear majorities. This is a Parliament which is faced with problems of more than usual magnitude. It is not only because Britain will be withdrawing her forces by the end of 1971. The whole security and political situation in South and Southeast Asia is in the process of change. The balance of forces, which have more or less held the position since 1954 when the French relinquished power over the whole of Vietnam, and the Americans stepped into the breach in the south, is now poised for a possible major shift.

Momentous changes in the political and security pattern of the region have already been set in motion. By the end of the term of this Parliament in 1973, it is probable that new security and political patterns would have begun to emerge. Peace and security will have to be ensured under different circumstances.

These historic events will have a profound influence on our future. Perhaps it was the awareness of this that made Singapore vote almost unanimously for the P.A.P. In the next five to ten years, issues of life and death will be determined more by factors around, rather than within, Singapore.

My Government will seek to achieve three objectives:

First, optimum use of the time available to build up an effective defence capability which, in conjunction with Malaysia and our other Commonwealth partners, can ensure continuing security. This must be done at minimum cost, so that most of our resources will go into economic development. It means, that although we have small numbers on active service, we shall have large numbers in the reserve service. These reserves will be well and regularly trained, ready for combat, but otherwise they will be in productive employment, contributing to the economic growth and progress of the country.

Second, greater economic growth, higher productivity with the elimination of restrictive practices, abuses of fringe benefits, and more efficient management. With ever lower costs we must reach out for more export markets. The continuance and consolidation of stable political and social conditions, sensible relations between labour, management and government, these are the pre-conditions for increased investments in the industrial and servicing sectors to create meaningful jobs for ever-increasing numbers of our more educated citizens seeking better jobs.

Third, enhancement of national consciousness of the problems that will come upon us in the next few years. We must all learn to place national interests above personal or sectional interests.

Internally, high morale - internationally, confidence in our continuing stability and efficiency - this combination will enable us to achieve new records in high performance.

The broad outlines of policy for each Ministry in my Government are set out in an addenda to this Address. To sum them up, it is to get full value for every dollar spent. To do this, everyone must put in a full day's work for a full day's wage. Sacrifice and greater effort in an emergency comes naturally to those who seek group, as against individual, salvation.

The resilience, resourcefulness and the indomitable spirit we have demonstrated in the last decade, they will enable us to overcome the problems following in the wake of changes in the security and economic conditions of the region we live in. These problems appear daunting only to the faint hearted.

Finally, I would wish Honourable Members to speak in forthright terms, to reflect and more important to lead thinking and feeling in the country, to ensure that everyone understands the challenge and gives of his best.

I wish Honourable Members a rewarding five years. May your deliberations and decisions leave the Republic the more flourishing and secure at the end of your term.