

PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY MR HO KAH LEONG, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(EDUCATION), AT THE NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION IN JURONG
AT YUNG SHENG ROAD, JURONG TOWN
ON SATURDAY, 18 AUGUST 1984 AT 8.00 PM**

This evening we are gathered here to celebrate two happy occasions - the 25 years of nation-building and the 19th year of independence.

Twenty-five years ago, when we attained self-government, we were faced with many problems, most of them serious, pressing and seemingly formidable and intractable. Unemployment was rife, people were poorly housed, unhealthy slums existed everywhere, the place was filthy, social cohesion was absent.

Faced with such problems, the PAP, when it took charge of the government, set about tackling these problems in an intelligent, systematic and rational manner. The government correctly identified that the key to the solution to these problems lies in economic development. Systematically we planned and provided the necessary infrastructure to attract investments, both local and foreign, to set up industrial enterprises, service industries and to expand trade. Many residents of Jurong have seen the transformation of farms and swamps into what is now the Jurong Industrial Complex, a thriving industrial town. So successful have we been in our economic development that we not only solved the unemployment problem but created for ourselves a new problem of labour shortage and foreign or guest workers.

The problem of housing shortage was tackled with characteristic determination and efficiency. Unhealthy slums were cleared and in their place spanking new HDB flats went up. We have reached a situation where people no longer worry about getting a flat but are more concerned about bigger floor area and better finishing for the flats. The cleanliness campaigns designed to inculcate better habits, together with the tree planting campaigns have made our country clean and green.

One of the most pressing problems in nation building is how to bring together as a cohesive whole, a society that is divergent in race, language, culture and religion. We have seen elsewhere how fearsome and destructive communal and racial conflicts can be. We ourselves have had some experience of this way back in the fifties and we know how perilous it is to our well-being and to the well-being of our nation. Our education policy and system, our system of grassroot organisations such as the Citizens' Consultative Committees, the Community Centre Management Committees and the Residents' Committees are all geared towards promoting racial harmony, mutual understanding, mutual tolerance and respect. We have social stability which has been achieved through the development of cohesion among all people in Singapore irrespective of race, language, culture and religion. With social stability we are able to develop orderly economic growth which brings about a higher standard of living for our people.

What we have achieved in 25 years is impressive by any standard. From a tiny island without the blessings of natural resources, we have built for ourselves a flourishing nation that is the envy of many a nation with rich natural resources. In the midst of all these celebrations, it is perhaps pertinent for us to note the Chinese saying, "To start an enterprise is difficult, to maintain it is even harder". With this sobering thought I wish you all a happy National Day.

Majulah Singapura!

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