

Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

Information Division, Ministry of Culture, City Hall, Singapore 0617 - tel: 328191 ext. 352, 353, 354 / 362207 / 362271.

National Archives and
Records Centre, Singapore

05-1/80/08/07.

18 AUG 1980

Acc. No. NARC

80	0050	19
----	------	----

SPEECH BY MR HOWE YOON CHONG, MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND
MP FOR POTONG PASIR, AT THE POTONG PASIR NATIONAL DAY
CELEBRATION DINNER AT THE SENNETT COMMUNITY CENTRE
ON THURSDAY, 7 AUGUST 1980 AT 8.00 PM

This year we celebrate the 15th Anniversary of our Independence. Much has been achieved during the last 15 years but much still remains to be done. Fifteen years is not a long time in the history of a nation. Our nation is still very young. The majority of our citizens are also young people, many have not experienced the difficult years that preceded our Independence. To them Singapore has always been what it is today, clean, green, and prosperous.

Our young citizens are today better educated and more highly trained in technical skills. This is as should be considering the vast amounts of money and effort that our country has spent in education and technical training. Their income is much higher and they have greater expectations. For instance, in their employment they are not simply satisfied with any job. They like a job that offers good prospects, that is well paid, in congenial working surroundings, and with shorter hours. This is not necessarily bad. Setting higher standards and aiming for better living and working conditions will bring about improvements in our society. They will provide the necessary motivation to drive the younger generation to work harder to attain their objectives.

The younger generation demands that our quality of life should improve through higher living standards, better quality jobs, better education for their children, better medical and health care, congenial living environment and better housing accommodation. All these are for the good of the society.

These expectations /2.

These expectations must be kept within the capacity of the people to achieve and the resources of the country to provide. Any motivation that can be of advantage to the progress of our society should be encouraged. Our people should accept that all these improvements do not come for free. They must work very hard for them. There must be improvements in education and productivity as well as advancements in science and technology in order to sustain the rising expectations.

Happily after two decades of struggle we have attained a level of development that will be able to meet with the aspirations of our people. Today our medical, health and educational facilities, our housing and our industrialization programmes have achieved some measure of success. We now house almost 70 per cent of the population, every child is able to get a place in our schools, our medical and health facilities are adequate, our university and higher technical educational institutions have expanded, our industries are being upgraded to concentrate on higher technology, and even in the employment field we have to import tens of thousands of work permit holders to help out. We can say that most of our urgent problems have been solved.

But with the solving of one set of problems, a new set of more difficult ones are created. New problems stem from rising expectations, full employment, increasing purchasing power, and a more sophisticated, better educated urban and industrial electorate. Human beings are seldom satisfied with what they can get, they always yearn for something higher and more difficult to obtain. For as long as we remember that whatever we want must be obtained through our hard work and greater productivity, all should be well. All that we have achieved today could not have been possible without hard work, economic and political stability, and a strong Government fully supported by the people. They could not have been possible without the strong leadership provided by the PAP. Without such economic and political stability, there could not be the steady economic growth that Singapore has enjoyed for the last 15 years.

We must remember also that all that we have achieved will be reduced to nought if there is no defence and security which will ensure that there is every confidence in our own future. Now that we have worked so hard for what we have achieved and we know that this is worth defending, we must make sure that everyone bears his share in defending his home and country. Every citizen should encourage the younger generation to take military training seriously and to contribute their share to the safety and security of the country.

What are the likely problems that will arise in the years ahead? We have recently been conducting a month long courtesy campaign which is still going on. This courtesy campaign reminds us that we live in a very highly urbanized and densely populated island. We need to be more understanding, tolerant, and sensitive to the feelings of others to avoid friction and tension.

Our increase in purchasing power has contributed to more traffic on our roads resulting in congestion, in more danger, in injury to life and limb, and in noise and air pollution of the environment. These affect our daily life and can be harmful to health in the long term. Yet these problems are not easy to solve. We must at least prevent them from getting out of hand.

Our increase in affluence helps us to pick up bad habits like cigarette smoking, drinking, and eating of wrong foods. Many of our younger and less educated people take to drugs. These give rise to social and health problems with repercussions on our medical, health, and social welfare facilities.

On the occasion of National Day, we should ponder over how best to meet the problems of the future. With a strong Government under good political leadership we can anticipate many problems and provide solutions or at least minimise their adverse effects. Many problems will have no solutions. Our people should learn to accommodate them in daily life and reduce their ill effects on the community.

Some problems may not lend themselves to easy solutions and many depend on advances of science and technology to deal effectively with them. Others require a better understanding of the social conditions to tolerate and accommodate them. We therefore need many more younger leaders who have close contacts with the community in which such problems arise or who have a deeper appreciation of the problems and aspirations of the younger generation. Our hardworking CCC and MC members have done well for many years but like all matters affected by progress, we need new blood to deal with the problems of the younger generation. We therefore welcome the few younger members who have come forward. Their numbers are still too meagre. We hope that in the months ahead we can induce more young leaders to come forward to serve. Only with their contribution can we help to solve the new problems and make Singapore a better place to live in.

For this year's National Day we can rejoice that our economy has weathered the world recession to main relative healthy growth. We can look forward into the new few years with confidence and with prospects of continued growth. But we must not slacken in our diligence and hard work. The future is still fraught with uncertainties. We need to continue to work hard, to increase our skills, to improve our productivity, and to save as much as possible of our earnings. We need safety and security. We must continue to strengthen our defence and security. What we have achieved is well worth defending but no one is going to defend us. We must defend ourselves. National service and reservist training must be taken very seriously. Our younger generation must be encouraged to train hard to be ready to defend Singapore against any eventuality.