

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE INCHE AHMAD BIN IBRAHIM BY THE
PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, BROADCAST OVER
RADIO SINGAPORE AT 9.40 P.M. ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 21ST, 1962.

You may have already heard the news that Inche Ahmad bin Ibrahim, Minister for Labour, passed away this afternoon at the General Hospital. Tonight, I would like to pay a tribute to him.

I first knew him about ten years ago when he led a delegation of members of the Naval Base Fire Brigade to get justice done for his fellow workers. It was an association which was to last for the rest of his brief but eventful life. The then Chief Fire Officer had been abusing his authority and the workers' interests suffered.

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Inche Ahmad was then a watchroom operator in the Naval Base Fire Brigade. He had come from Penang after the war to work there. Although he was only educated up to Standard VI, by his devotion to his fellow workers and his ability, he became one of the leaders of the Naval Base Labour Union.

In 1955 he contested the general elections in Sembawang as a candidate of the Naval Base Labour Union, and was returned to the Legislative Assembly. In 1959, he was re-elected and became Minister for Health.

In January 1958, he underwent a major operation in the General Hospital. Since then he has not been very well. In 1961, he underwent another operation in connection with his liver ailment. But in spite of his poor health, he was always prepared to shoulder his responsibility. In September last, he undertook the heavy responsibility of Minister for Labour, at a time when the greatest amount of pressure was expected to be exerted on this Ministry. He was by his long experience and quiet strong character the best man for the job, and he had no hesitation in undertaking this responsibility.

But from May this year, much against his own will, he had to go on medical leave. The doctors and surgeons did everything they could for him. His wife and family would like me to thank them for all they have done. By his tremendous courage, his patience and constant cheerfulness in the face of adversity he made the doctors and nurses in the hospital who attended to him all his friends.

He made friends easily, and there are many in Singapore who cannot help liking him as a man, his modesty and straight-forwardness. Although my colleagues and I know since June this year that he did not have much time left, still we all could not help feeling a sense of grievous loss when we received the news of his death shortly after 3 p.m. today whilst we were at Cabinet meeting.

He was a man dedicated to the cause of his fellow workers regardless of race or religion. The many who know him will want to join me in paying tribute to a sincere and staunch fighter for the cause of all the workers. They will also join me in expressing to his wife and children our deepest sympathies in this their moment of grief. I have lost a dear friend and colleague. I can imagine how they must feel.

August 21st, 1962

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