

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW,
ON THE MOTION OF THANKS TO THE YANG DI-PERTUAN
NEGARA AT THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
ON 9TH DECEMBER, 1963.

New Assembly With New Responsibilities

It is nearly 2½ years since the Communist broke off from the united front with the nationalist left in the P.A.P. to form their own front organizations to fight against and prevent Malaysia.

We meet again today at the first business session of this new Assembly under very different circumstances. The change that has taken place is a basic mutation in the role and jurisdiction of this Assembly. Many of the forms and rituals have continued. But some Members may have noted that the guns did

not boom in salute when His Excellency the Yang di-Pertuan Negara arrived in this Assembly to deliver his speech on the 29th November. It did not, because the Central Government ruled it to be so. They are in control of the army which includes the two Singapore Infantry Battalions, and their practice is that no ceremonial salutes will be given to any Governor of Penang or Malacca or the Yang di-Pertuan Negara of Singapore. It symbolises the shift in authority.

So too those Members who were with us in the last Assembly will have noted that the Committee of Supply on the Budget has been reduced from five to three days with their concurrence. For the matters to be discussed no longer include a list ranging from police, prisons and army to civil aviation, meteorological office, posts and telecommunications, audit, are all now in the jurisdiction of the Central Government. It means, in effect, that ultimate power is now vested in the Parliament of Malaysia, and any political movement or party that wishes to re-order the state of our society will have to assume authority for all Malaysia.

No Communist Singapore until Communist Malaysia

I have stated on many a previous occasion that there cannot be a Communist Singapore until there is a Communist Malaya and that whoever wishes to make Singapore Communist they must first capture power in Malaya. This was an analysis of the political power situation between Singapore and Malaya as it existed since 1948. It is now formally translated into the provisions of the Constitution of Malaysia. There can be no Communist Singapore until there is first a Communist Government of Malaysia.

Indeed, whichever political movement wishes to win authority and the right to reshape the structure of our economy and our society must first win the majority of the number of seats in the Parliament of Malaysia and command the loyalty of the administration, the army and the police.

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The fact that we have so many matters including three-quarters of our revenue still reserved for the State Government does not alter the fact that we are now part of Malaysia. Our influence in Malaysia will be determined not by the number of seats that Singapore has in Parliament but by the example that she can set for the rest of Malaysia, an example of the possibilities opening up vistas

of progress and prosperity which can be more equally shared by all if similar policies were adopted at the Centre.

Singapore's impact on the Malaysian scene

Our influence over the deliberations of Parliament in the policies of the Central Government has yet to be felt. So much will depend on what happens in the elections in Malaya next year. Everybody concedes that the U.M.N.O. side of the Alliance can and will win a clear majority. But everybody is waiting to see what happens with the vote in the urban areas, in all the main towns in Malaya. For arising out of that vote, some vital decisions will have to be made both by U.M.N.O. leaders and by us in Singapore.

It is fairly obvious that if it were possible for M.C.A. to hold the towns, then the present structure of the Central Government and the policies it pursues can go on unchanged. But if the towns decisively reject all M.C.A. candidates, then there must be a re-appraisal by the U.M.N.O. leaders. They will then have to decide whether they come to terms with a leadership that can command the loyalty of the sophisticated urban population, Chinese, Indians, Eurasians and others, or govern without the partnership of the leadership of the

towns. It is when this moment is reached sometime next year that the bits and pieces will fall into their proper places in the Malaysian scene.

The struggle for power and authority to remould our society is now in the much bigger Malaysian arena and the outcome of this struggle is final and conclusive. Thereafter, the facts of life in Malaysia will have to be faced by us all.

The tragedy is that in quite a number of these towns in Malaya there is no coherent constructive alternative. Yet in spite of this there could be a massive protest vote registered, a vote not so much for the opposition parties and certainly not for the Communist manipulated Socialist Front, or the other multifarious parties but a vote against the present urban representatives and their records.

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Division lines in Singapore

Meanwhile in Singapore, in many ways the issues and the position of the parties are much clearer to everyone. The line that divides the Government and the Opposition is between those who are for Malaysia and our survival in South-East Asia as a separate political entity, and Barisan Sosialis, as

front for the Communists who, for their own selfish ends, tried to prevent Malaysia, and so prevent merger; who even now after the creation of Malaysia, are still anti-Malaysia and against the nation.

Barisan still anti-Malaysia

At one time in October about six weeks ago, it looked as though with the creation of Malaysia the Communists would accept its establishment and try to win within Malaysia. But there are increasing signs that they have decided to continue their anti-Malaysia struggle, even though this means that they are more and more openly identified with outside forces, like the P.K.I., who are out to crush Malaysia. National service they have condemned, and in its place is their pious suggestion that we should beg to be allowed to live in peace, presumably by abandoning Sabah and Sarawak to their fate. This is the line of treachery and betrayal.

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This is not a line likely to win them popular support. They are caught in the intricacies of their international conspiracy. The line has been laid for them and they have to go on plugging it even if it means their losing popular support within Malaysia. However, they will try to win support by their exploitation of Chinese educational issues, by the capture and control of trade

unions, and manipulation of civic organisations both in the city and in the rural areas. The battle continues on the same old issues over the same old battlefields.

Political Complexion of Assembly More Accurate

The political complexion of this Assembly today reflects more accurately the respective strength of ground feeling and the respective support for competing ideologies. We represent the majority, who prefer the sometimes slower but less drastic progress towards a more equal but more humane society. They represent the frustrations, hatreds and bitterness of a minority who are ideologically convinced that no government but a Communist one can provide a permanent solution to our economic and social ills.

We who have known them for so long know that they are very far from giving up their struggle. Their top leaders never came out to be expended. It was only the second rank leaders put in the first line of the open front leadership who have been sacrificed. And the battle will go on relentlessly. We must continue from time to time to spotlight them every now and again when they are up to mischief and to expose them. The Barisan Sosialis must be shown to be still a Communist front exploiting the name and principles of the democratic system with the purpose of destroying them.

Assembly More Concern With Construction

However, in this Legislative Chamber under our new Constitution, we will be concerned more with the constructive aspect of Government – schools, hospitals, housing, community centres, roads, bridges, drains, parks, and most important of all, factories. For only the industrial base which we are now forging can provide a better life for us all.

In the last ten years of this Chamber so much of the time of this House was preoccupied with the struggle for independence. It was inevitable that we should be preoccupied then with national freedom and the right to determine our own destiny. In the Opposition in the years 1955-59, I myself have taken up the time of the House on the problems of how to achieve freedom.

But I had hoped that with the attainment of full internal self-government in June 1959 we would begin to emphasis the constructive side of Government -- how to create a better society and provide higher living standards for all, how to create higher social values and civic responsibility. But that was not to be. For the Communists it was vital that progress should be minimal. The more we progress the less likely an eventual Communist victory. And so the destructive debate went on about the police, prisons, defence bases and anti-colonialism.

Communist Against National Construction

I have no doubt that they will pursue these issues in the Parliament in Kuala Lumpur. But we would be foolish to believe that because we are now independent, therefore the Communists will admit that there is a duty on the part of the representatives of the people to construct and not to destroy. They cannot admit that any national construction is possible until all economic ties and military alliances with any Western bloc power have been destroyed. And now since colonialism is no longer there, they have to say that the fight must be against new colonialism or “neo-colonialism” as they call it.

We represent the rest versus M.C.P.

The division between this side of the House and the Opposition is deep and abiding. They represent the minority, but a militant and tightly knit minority, determined to bring the democratic state down and establish a Communist regime. We on this side of the House are privileged to have been chosen to represent the majority, the rest of the people who want Malaysia to live in peace and to progress unmolested. We are a party dedicated to democratic socialism. But it is our duty to recognise that the only long term basis on which

national unity can be forged and stability ensured is for us to bind all those sectors of society who reject the soul-less creed of a Communist dictatorship as the only answer to our undoubtedly many social evils. We are proud that in the process we have been able to convince large sectors of the community, from working class labourers to wealthy merchants and the professional and middle classes, that the long term answer to the Communist challenge lies in an honest and effective government whose social and economic policies can bring about appreciable and a visible equalisation of opportunity.

We would be breaking faith with the mass of the people who voted for us this time if we did not recognise that we represent as the governing party a broad cross-section of the community. We must recognise further that their aspirations are to have a more equal society through the more difficult process of levelling up and not levelling down. In this city of pushful people, energetic and hard working largely of immigrant stock the desire is that there should be more opportunities for everyone to work harder and to do better and increase the size of the national cake as much if not more than the desire to share the cake more equally.

We would be doing a dis-service to the country if we mislead people into believing that just because this last time the Communists were

defeated they will thereby remain an impotent force. There are already signs of their picking up the bits and pieces left of their organisation wrecked by the disastrous policies they have pursued. We cannot expect them always to be so accommodating in the next round, to continue making false and erroneous assumptions.

National Construction Must Proceed

But however skilful they are, they face this one crucial test: their attitude to the constructive side of nation building. However much they can play up anti-neo-colonialism, can they really persuade the people that construction should be further delayed?

I would like to enumerate the principal targets of constructive effort in the next five years.

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I. Industrialisation:

(i) The first is industrialisation. A climate of confidence exists both in the stability of Malaysia and in the known policies of the Singapore Government. The only factor that could upset this climate of overwhelming confidence is if confrontation were to hot up into a military adventure. This is a factor beyond our control. We can only hope that the major world powers will always have their own interests to preserve and to ensure that there is no accidental conflict.

The one important factor within our competence to ensure the success of industrialisation is the supply of skilled efficient workers and to ensure that they are organised into unions designed to further the interests of the workers and not exploited by the Communist united front for political purposes.

(ii) Housing and Rebuilding of old city:

The second target is housing and rebuilding of old city. We plan to build 60,000 more units in the next five years. We are confident that the target can be achieved in spite of the temporary setback of Indonesian confrontation. There is every hope that, when

the 8.7% gap in our national income is recovered in two years and our industries begin to flourish, we may well exceed this target of 60,000. The amount by which we can exceed this target depends very largely on the growth of our industries.

Meanwhile, the first phase of the re-building of the central city area has begun. Outram Road jail is being demolished to house eventually some 7,000 to 10,000 families. If building by private developers, which is again dependent on our economic progress, keeps increasing at the rate it has done over the last 3 years, then it is not unlikely that in five years, one quarter of the old city would have been rebuilt.

(iii) Education:

The third target is education. It is already a near miracle that we can now afford to have all children in primary schools. Forward planning for construction of schools and the training of teachers will keep up with the ever increasing demand. Our next target in education is to increase the secondary vocational schools so that children who are more suited to work with their hands and eyes than their minds will not fritter away their years

between their leaving primary school and getting their first job. We must build up a whole army of technicians which a modern industrial society requires.

One special problem in education is how to check the nation from being undermined by Communist groups recruiting and training in some Chinese schools and in Nanyang University; and in Nanyang University the Communists may confuse some people into believing that action meant to restrict their conspiracy is a violation of some sacred principle.

Nanyang University Council has hitherto spurned every Government grant to help it raise its standards and put its organisation into shape, largely because the Communists have been able to manipulate some leaders of the Chinese merchant community who have pretensions to greatness to perhaps inherit the mantle of another Chinese patriot like the late Tan Kah Kee.

In Nanyang University with their financial autonomy leaving them in an academic morass, a situation is developing, which, if left unchecked within five years, will make it a University of Yen-an more than of Nanyang with young pro-Communist graduates and student leaders manipulating the entire governing Council of Nanyang University. Professors and lecturers on year to year

contracts renewable at will of the Council cannot have economic security, let alone academic freedom. Indeed, the problems of Nanyang can never be resolved until the political abuse the Communists make of it is exposed and stopped.

Only a few days ago, the Communists manipulated Nanyang University Students' Union issued a statement declaring that the University Council should discontinue discussions with the Government on aid and reorganisation and without supervision and refuse any financial aid unless given unconditionally.

It is the duty of the Government to raise academic standards in Nanyang University and give it as much assistance as it gives to the University of Singapore. But it is also the duty of the Government to see that none of this money is allowed to be expended on strengthening the intellectual cadre of the Communist Party of Malaya. And it is our duty to see that this does not take place, whether it is in Nanyang University or for that matter in the University of Singapore.

Members will agree that it is not the business of our Government to give money to help train more Communist cadres to destroy the democratic state.

And we must be satisfied that authority and discipline of the academic staff and of a proper governing council of responsible people comprising the founders of Nanyang University from the various states of Malaya, the Senate and the Government that provides the funds, is not manipulated and controlled by the Communists.

We must deal with this problem as delicately as the sensitiveness of the problem requires. But in the end the truth will be established, that here is a state of affairs in which a group of militant Chinese Communist from Chinese Middle Schools exploiting the egoism of some merchant millionaires with pretensions to fame and greatness have established their control over the University. When a professor can be asked to explain why certain students fail then academic freedom has not just been destroyed. Near anarchy has set in.

IV. Social Standards

The fourth target is the raising of social standards. By social standards I do not mean only an increase in our social standards I do not mean only an increase in our social and cultural amenities, however important they are – unemployment benefits, sickness benefits, scholarships and bursaries to secondary schools and universities, community centres, television, or the

National Theatre. I wish to emphasize higher standards of public and social conduct. This can be brought about by a sustained process of education.

It was inevitable that with new forms of popular and representative government, hawkers, squatters and other social problems increase. But slowly as social standards and civic consciousness correspondingly increased, hawkers, for instance, begin to understand that they must stay out of the main traffic routes and that they must for their own sake maintain certain standards of cleanliness and hygiene. Litter and rubbish, flies and mosquitoes are not only the job of the Health Ministry and the workers in the Cleansing Department, but the social responsibility of all.

Communist Obstruction will continue

We are realist enough to anticipate Barisan Sosialis and their Communist front organizations will become more skilful in their tactics to obstruct and prevent Singapore's success. In thwarting industrialisation they can create unrest in labour unions and a sense of insecurity to prospective investors.

We know they will also become more skilful in camouflaging their tactics of blocking the clearance of sites for housing, schools, clinics and other development plans.

The stage has been set for the next five years. We can and will succeed. The Constitution and responsibilities of this Assembly have been changed, if anything, for the better. Whilst the State Assembly may not have so many matters to look after, we have enough of the constructive side left to make our meetings useful occasions when progress can be reviewed and faults remedied.

Criticism from Opposition and Government Backbenchers useful

It would be useful if at these meetings criticism of our shortcomings either in policy or implementation were aired not only by the Opposition but also by our own backbenchers. It can serve a useful purpose in bringing public attention on how things are done, how they can be done better, or why an apparent ineptitude has in fact a rational and valid explanation.

Barisan Minimising importance of Assembly and Parliament

You may have noticed, Mr. Speaker, Sir, since our first meeting in October that the Barisan Sosialis, through its chairman, has issued a statement in which they clearly expressed their intention to downgrade the value of this Chamber. No doubt partly as a result of his unprofitable effort in the last Assembly the Chairman of the Barisan Sosialis, the former Member for Queenstown, has stated that what is more important is what they do outside and not inside the Legislative Assembly and Parliament. Obviously they have come to realise that people were not impressed with the marathon speeches and futile debates we had in the last Assembly, and quite rightly so. Debates underline important issues and needs but I believe this Chamber can serve a useful function to spotlight the hopes and aspirations of the people, to underline the duties of the Government, to point out where it can do more, and finally to bring about a greater understanding of our problems and improve our effort to build a better Singapore.

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We must never be afraid of departing from accepted and habitual practice either in this Chamber or without. And it is for this reason that I invite our own back-benchers to criticise the Government in this Chamber for what they consider to be shortcomings, even though this may not be the practice elsewhere. For all of us inside this Chamber must realise that the mental attitudes and responses of the mass of the people outside this Chamber are very different from

those of the people who elect representatives to the House of Commons in Britain.

We have gathered valuable experience from our difficulties over the last ten years. To ensure that the democratic system prevails we must not only ensure that there is an honest and effective Government that produces results. What is more important is that we must also ensure that it is able to keep in touch with the mass of the people, to produce those results in the form and manner the people consider desirable, and to prevent the Communists from distorting the success of the Government or subverting public loyalties by pressure and manipulation.

Citizens Consultative Committees

In the next five years we will see the growth in my office of a special department which will help to create and build up a whole series of grass-root organisations in every village, in every street, and in every community. All those active in the interests of their fellow citizens can find rewarding work and recognition in Citizens' Consultative Committees. For in the end not only must we succeed in making Singapore a better place, but we must also succeed in building up an organisational structure within the country that can help strengthen

the links between the people and their government so that the best that can be done will be done in their interests. Only in this way can we ensure stability and progress towards a more enlightened and healthy society.

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