

SUMMARY OF THE SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER

MR. LEE KUAN YEW IN PARLIAMENT ON 14TH DECEMBER, 1965,
WHEN HE MOVED THE MOTION OF THANKS TO THE YANG DI-
PERTUAN NEGARA FOR HIS ADDRESS

The Prime Minister said,

What we wish to do now is to get into a new working relationship with our former partners in Malaysia. And this working relationship is likely to come about only if we were to approach it on a matter of fact basis of what is the common benefit to be derived in any act of economic or other co-operation.

Before a new working relationship is established, we must first dispel the illusion that because we wanted merger in Malaysia, therefore we were vulnerable without merger. Whilst politically an independent Singapore holds hazards in the long-term, not just for ourselves but for all in South-East Asia, economically it does not follow that it is within the dispensation of our neighbours to decide our economic destiny. Two years of confrontation have given us an economic destiny. Two years of confrontation have given us an opportunity to demonstrate that we did not live on the bounty of our neighbours. We did them a service and if the service was not required, the services could be

extended elsewhere for other returns. And it may take some time and no little effort before the same axiom is demonstrated with other neighbours. But eventually I am reasonably confident that we can reach a rational relationship, not one in which the bigger assumes automatically that he must get the greater benefit but a relationship in which each and every step is weighed in accordance whether it is of value to them and to us. In other words, a relationship based on a quid pro quo. And in this way we hope to establish in the course of the next year a new balance which has now become necessary as a result of our emergence as a sovereign State living with the Government of Malaysia not as a State Government to central authority but as two independent and sovereign regimes.

The Prime Minister said,

We can safely predict that in two decades, either there is a tolerant multi-racial society comprising us in this region or this will be an area of constant strife, very much like what the Balkan states were before and after the First World War. We are here in South-East Asia for better or for worse and we are here to stay, and our policies are designed to ensure that we stay peacefully in South-East Asia in accord and amity with our neighbours but with a right to decide how we order our own lives in our own home. And every action, every

policy must be decided by this yardstick. Any policy which endangers our long-term interests as a separate and distinct community in this region must be eschewed and any act, any programme, any decision which will help to secure a more enduring future for ourselves and our progeny in this region must be pursued whatever the sacrifice. We have not sought this particular formula of survival, but it is now the basis on which we move forward and with independence comes an independence of action in policy and planning which can help establish that enduring basis for ourselves in South-East Asia. It is with confidence -- a confidence born out of the past performance of our people -- that we feel we can overcome problems of economic development, problems of unemployment."

The Prime Minister said,

I would like to draw the attention of the House on the Five-Year programme that we have outlined in the Address of His Excellency the Yang di-Pertuan Negara. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, Sir, His Excellency mentioned the land reclamation projects which are going on, 620 acres in Toa Payoh, excess land from which is used to reclaim 400 acres in the Kallang Basin -- Next, the reclamation of land from Bedok to Tanjong Rhu of about 1,000 acres, giving in turn another 600 acres of available land from sites where excavations are now

being made for the filling. Then the Housing and Development Board plans for 6,000 units in the next five years. I do not think there is much doubt that these targets will be achieved.

But to explain first the interim measures which we have had to take to stabilise and limit our liability and second, our long-term, attitude on the future of Singapore and of the people that we consider one with Singapore, the people in Malaysia. In the short-term, we have had to introduce certain new measures in order that we can take stock of what our liabilities are, our immediate liability to give jobs to our own people, our own citizens, provide schools for their children, hospitals and social and community services, housing and so on. To this end, identity cards and work permits will be implemented.

The rate of inflow into Singapore has increased to twice the normal rate prevailing before the 9th of August, the rough gross turn-over of people crossing the causeway on both sides since the 9th of August shows an increase or a credit or plus on the Singapore side of about nearly 50,000. Assuming that 10,000 went abroad by ships and aircraft, we would still be left with a net credit of about 40,000 people.

Our policy is not designed to exclude Malaysians. But to limit our liabilities so that we know what it is we have to cater for. For only by making our problems finite will we be able to know what it is that we must do in order to ensure the economic viability of Singapore. And only then will we be able to define the problem and the solutions to these problems which we hope will come by way of new markets being made available to us. I would like to emphasise that so far as we are concerned, we are one people in two countries. All that separation has done is to divide the one society into two not altogether dissimilar parts. But whereas before we would have sought one solution for the whole, now there are two experiments being carried out in these two halves. And the policies, experiments on how to find a solution to the problems of multi-racialism, multi-lingualism and a multiplicity of religion, and the policies pursued in any one is bound to have a repercussion on the attitudes and assessments on the other side, and the side which produces a successful solution is the side whose views will ultimately prevail. I have said that this is one people now divided into two and two arenas. But in the last resort they are one people, and work permits and everything else notwithstanding, in an emergency it would be inhuman to believe and unrealistic on our part to believe that we can maintain a separate and a disinterested posture if major catastrophe were to take place in South-East Asia.

The danger of a major catastrophe which we can precipitate if we are not conscious of the problems of finding a new balance in South-East Asia to take the place of a balance which was maintained by the European Empires before the war.

The multi-racial character of the population of Singapore and the states of Malaysia creates the probabilities of two different trends. As long as British rule puts everybody in place, multi-racialism or the problems of having a multiplicity of communities of different races, languages, religions, never gave rise to any problems of law and order. The British Raj decided who should do what and who fulfil what roles in their system. The disappearance of direct political control has brought about the necessity of finding an authority, indigenous to the peoples who now resides in these territories and a compromise was found in certain forms of elected representation weighted to hold the balance between people who were supposed to have been longer here, indigenous and those who were supposed to be more recent migrants. As long as we are one, Singapore and Malaysia, the danger of the multi-racial communities going their separate ways was less than they are now. If we are not conscious of this and we each play only to our own immediate electorate, then having two halves of one whole, and not very equal halves of one whole, one in which the accent is inevitably that in Singapore, in numbers, that the migrant community or people of migrant stock

and in the other in Malaya peoples of indigenous stock, a polarisation of policies and attitudes would take place which in the end may well bring major calamity for all in South-East Asia, with repercussions throughout the whole of Asia.

There are dangers to which we are inevitably going to slide into if we begin to think in terms of race and racial hegemony. And hence the recurring theme of multi-racialism, of tolerance, of understanding and sympathy, and forbearance, of other people`s habits, customs, susceptibilities. If, on the Singapore half, account is taken only of the Singapore sector of this one people, then the solution that will be derived out of that one sector will be very different from the solution which will be derived if we took into account the whole. And the very different solution attempted here, based on the demographic features of Singapore, will in turn act as a spur to contrary measures being taken on the other side and so it could go on until inevitable conflict. Conflict, not only between two independent and sovereign nations but between two independent and sovereign nations both with plural societies.

We are longer in a position to decide or in any way to influence the course of political events in Malaysia. That was the price of independence for Singapore, But I think we would be dishonest to ourselves if we did not express a profound interest in the policies and the consequences of such policies upon the

relationship between the communities in Malaysia which would, in turn, help to influence attitudes and relationships between communities in Singapore. I see the future more fraught with danger than before separation -- the long-term future -- for if there is a failure to understand this nexus between us then it is extremely easy for one to embarrass and to influence attitudes and policies in the other which, as I have said, must end up in the polarisation of two opposing attitudes based on two opposing assumptions of superiority of race, language, and culture, which can only spell disaster for all.

But whilst we have no control over events there, independence has given as a unique opportunity to order our way of life, and I would like to believe that the two years we spent in Malaysia are years which will not be easily forgotten, years in which the people of migrant stock here who are a majority, learnt of the terrors and the follies and the bitterness which is generated when one group tries to assert its dominance over the other on the basis of one race, one language, one religion, it is because I am fortified by this that my colleagues and I were determined as from the moment of separation, that this lesson will never be forgotten. So it is that into the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore will be built-in safeguards insofar as the human mind can devise means whereby conglomeration of numbers, of likeness, as a result of affinities of race or language or culture, shall never work to the detriment of those who by the

accident of history find themselves in minority groups in Singapore. There will be this Commission which will hear the views of all the minority communities, and it may well be that the recommendations would be sufficiently wide to ensure not only the individuals shall not be penalised or discriminated against by reasons of race, language or culture, but also that their views should always be taken into consideration when formulating policies which affect their collective interest. It is more than just an idealistic desire to create a just new world that has motivated us.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have a vested interest in multi-racialism and the secular state for the anti-thesis of multi-racialism and the anti-thesis of secularism holds perils of enormous magnitude not just for the people living here in South-East Asia but dangers of involvement by bigger powers who see in such a conflict fertile ground for exploitation of either the ideological or other power interests.

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The future is not ours to see, Mr. Speaker, Sir, but we can safely conclude that there are two possible trends in which events can unfold themselves. One, the emergence in one half, helping the emergence in the other half of a tolerant society not based on the concepts of exclusiveness of race, language, religion, which means an ultimate re-association, a political re-

association, of the parts which form the one larger federation of which we were a member of until so recently, and the other a trend towards a bias and emphasis on exclusiveness of race, language, religion, which must have fissiparous effects, divisive effects on the other.

There is an element of urgency in this and we are reassured to see an air of more confidence in dealing with problems of language and culture now that we are out of Malaysia. This in turn helps us in our solution of the problems on this side and for us we can only hope at ultimately our policies will also be able to help our neighbours reaching similar rational adjustments in their own domestic arrangements. In the meantime, the business of life and administration has to go on. I do not wish to go into the figures given by my colleague, the Minister for Finance, yesterday, but I would like to add this comment, that however important statistics are in giving weight to an argument or to demonstrate the validity of

certain premises, statistics are never able in themselves to give a complete picture of what the performance is going to be for they fail in bringing forth one important quality-- the effectiveness of the digits of the units that the statistics comprise. Sir, we are nearly two million people --1.9 million -- in an island 224 square miles with a few adjacent islands. The statistics do not tell the world what will decide the factor that really decides performance, the quality of each individual digit, the intensity of the effort that the digits are capable of and the

efficacy of the framework within which the digits can be marshalled and organised high performance. For us, survival has always been hazardous. We sought to make it less so by seeking the larger framework of Malaysia, but it was not to. We are on our own, not unfriendliness, not helpless, but nevertheless in the centre of an extremely tumultuous arena of conflict. And our survival depends upon our capacity first to discern where the dangers are for us as a distinct and separate community in South-East Asia and second our ability to convince the bigger powers interested in this region that it is in their interests to ensure our separate survival and in the end whatever happens to ensure that we have get enough will and capacity to see that no policies, no solutions are attempted which will destroy our right to be ourselves in this corner of South-East Asia.

The Prime Minister in his speech also analysed the reasons for the Barisan boycott of Parliament. After many verbatim quotations from their publications and those of their pro-communist sympathisers, Mr. Lee said that more important than the quotations was the approach to parliamentary democracy of the party and their ideology as revealed in the three instalments of an article which bears the title "British parliamentary democracy -- What it means" which appeared during November and December in the Plebian express. They follow a simple Marxist-Leninist line, which is their hard line, a denial of the value of any

democratic institution, not only of this house, Singapore's Parliament, but a denial of the worthwhileness of the constitutional struggle of winning power by popular elections.

Whatever would be the future policy of the Barisan Sosialis, it is useful for us to remember that their objective never changes. But fortunately for us this time, a series of false premises have led them into so blinkered a situation that they come to a series of repeated defeats and into more illogical, absurd and untenable propositions. They have mesmerised themselves by repeating words like 'phoney'.

Finally the Prime Minister concluded, there are other factors, factors outside our dispensation which can affect our own position. But whatever the result will be, I think we would like those who come after us to believe and who have grounds for believing that we did not leave a stone unturned in seeking a just and enduring future for all the people who made up the society -- those who were here when the British came, those who came when the British were in control and these who are willy nilly now rooted in this corner of South-East Asia and whose destinies are interwoven -- whatever we would have wished it to be.

14th December, 1965.