

TRANSCRIPT OF PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH AT THE
FIRST ANNUAL DINNER OF THE JURONG SHIPYARD
LTD. HELD AT THE SINGAPORE BADMINTON HALL ON 14TH
JANUARY, 1967.

Mr. President, friends and fellow-citizens,

I want to congratulate both the Union and the Management in Jurong Shipyard for having reminded us of the possibilities that our position in Southeast Asia offers us.

We have had a big shipyard all these years for building small ships and repairing big ones in Keppel. We have another large shipyard in Sembawang.

But it needed the Economic Development Board and a Japanese concern to remind us of the potential we have got.

You know, many people believe that because we are a small place, we therefore owe our prosperity to others; that we owe our living to other people's hinterland. This is not altogether true.

Slowly, as we are forced to rethink our problems, opportunities will open up. And, one of our greatest assets is our location -- just being here at the southernmost tip of Asia. If you want to go from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific; from the West to the East or the East to the West; if you want to go from Australia to Europe or to Japan, the sea-routes and the air-routes make us a logical point of intersection.

We are an island-nation and there have been other island-nations in recent history, and they were always great shipbuilders and great sea-faring people -- for instance, the British and the Japanese.

The British, before World War II, were the second biggest shipbuilders and seafarers in the world. Today, the Japanese have displaced them as the biggest shipbuilders and seafarers.

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I think we can take a leaf out of their history. We are a people never too proud to learn from others. We are not ashamed of learning. That is what has made Singapore survive.

We will repair ships, build ships, sail them; and fish the oceans. The oceans and the seas are international. They are for everybody and they are singularly open to those who have good harbours as we have.

I would like to believe, over the years, that not only will Jurong Shipyard prosper but that it will, by its very example, give that added stimulation to the older establishment we have got in Keppel.

For the last 20 years, we have had 2,500 workers in Keppel Harbour: the number has never increased. Three years ago, you started off with nothing; now you have 600 workers. And, do you know, on the books, just on paper, through a little re-organization, by working it round the clock, the number of workers in Keppel Harbour can be doubled, without any trouble, from 2,500 to 5,000. And that is exactly what we must do.

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We have invited a firm of British dockyards just to manage it for the time being. But, we are making it open to everybody -- Japanese, British, Norwegians, Swedes -- to come into business with us in Keppel and compete with Jurong.

So, your success means that you have stimulated something which has always been ours and which has got dormant. But I believe by this process of inter-action that we will finally create more jobs, more economic activity, more profits and a better life for more people in Singapore.

On that note, I wish all of you a happy, prosperous and, most important of all, a profitable 1967.

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