

ADDRESS BY PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN, MR. SATO,
AT A STATE DINNER WELCOMING THE PRIME MINISTER
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE AND MRS. LEE KUAN YEW
ON 15TH OCTOBER, 1968

Mr. Prime Minister, Mrs. Lee Kuan Yew, Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This evening we take great pleasure in extending a hearty welcome to His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore, Mrs. Lee and their party.

In September last year my wife and I were privileged with the opportunity to realize our long-held wish to visit the Republic of Singapore and were accorded a most gracious reception by you, Mr. Prime Minister, and the people of Singapore. The memory of the beautiful scenes of your land glowing under the tropical sun and, above all, the nature so affluent in colour and the people so full of life, is still vivid in our minds.

A visitor to Singapore early in the last century who saw there only a small island, mostly covered with mangrove swamps and jungles, could he have possibly foreseen the Singapore of today which boasts a population of two million enjoying the highest standard of living in Southeast Asia? Nothing is indeed more unlikely.

Singapore is hardly blessed either with natural resources or with arable land, but in that stead, it enjoys the status of a busy crossroads in air and sea communications as well as in international trade. Assuredly, it is the great enterprise and the assiduous efforts with which its people have made the most of this advantageous status that has brought about the country's prosperity of the present day.

Your Excellency, Asia is now at one of the most important turning-points in history. The major powers which have been up to now playing a vital role in the maintenance of security and economic development of this region over the past several centuries appear now to be turning over that role to the self-help and co-operation on the part of the nations within the region.

Asian nations, with all their affinity in religious and cultural heritages and their mutual geographical propinquity, have notably lagged in

developing close mutual relationships behind the other parts of the world, largely due to the restrictions caused by the historical developments over the last few centuries. In recent years, however, a trend has been growing towards a closer co-operation among the countries of this region. We in Japan wish, on our part, to advance friendly and co-operative relationship with Singapore on a bilateral basis in the future as ever before. On the other hand, we anticipate also to be able to promote closer co-operation and solidarity with the neighbouring countries including Singapore, within the framework of such regional co-operation.

Meanwhile, for Singapore whose prosperity would have appeared to be almost inseparable from its closely-knit relationships with Britain in every field, the political and economic problems posed by the withdrawal of British troops to be completed within the next three years could indeed be more serious in their implications, as we fully appreciate it.

At the same time, however, we are aware of the indomitable determination with which Your Excellency and the Government and people of Singapore are going to face this trying period of transition.

Mr. Prime Minister, I firmly believe that the course Singapore is following today is, however thorny it may be, a path leading to a bright and hopeful future.

Only twenty years ago, we were in the depth of despair at the disastrous devastations brought by the lost war. With the overflowing population, the deficiency in natural resources and the war-devastated land, the outlook on the future of the nation could have hardly been more dismal. Who could have dreamed in those past days that Japan suffering from severe problems of unemployment and food shortage would find herself, twenty years later, obliged to tackle seriously the problem of labour shortage. The postwar recovery and growth of our country is often referred to as "Japan's miracle." But, looking back on the developments of the past two decades in Japan, we feel convinced that this is in no way a miracle but a development that may take place in any country with the people endowed with initiative and vigour.

Singapore is, just like Japan, a small island country, deficient in natural resources and arable land. Undoubtedly, there was time when meagre natural resources and a limited scope of territory posed an almost decisive handicap to the development of national strength and the growth of national economy. In the prewar years this was in fact a generally accepted reality in the

international community. Our two countries, Japan and Singapore, have reversed this old reality through the postwar achievements.

In particular, Singapore is favoured by the prominent leadership of Prime Minister Lee himself, a clean and efficient government, well-developed social overhead capital, and, above all, two million industrious people endowed with vigour and enterprise. Furthermore, the international machinery for co-operation to help accelerate the development of national economy on the basis of sound plans has undergone notable improvement and expansion during the past twenty years.

Mr. Prime Minister, the problems now facing your Republic may be nothing easy to overcome. But, I am confident that the initiative and industry of your people which only have been able to transform the small wild island into one of the largest modern port cities in the world will build up new foundations of a lasting prosperity for Singapore.

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, I ask you all to rise and join me in
toasting to the health and happiness of His Excellency the Prime Minister of
Singapore and Mrs. Lee Kuan Yew and to the continuing development and
greater prosperity of the Republic of Singapore.

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