

SUMMARY OF SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER,
MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT THE 5TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATIONS OF THE TANAH MERAH BESAR
COMMUNITY CENTRE ON 26TH JUNE, 1971

In this decade Changi will become the site of our middle technology and "clean" industries. Several factories are being built and will begin production by the end of 1972 and beginning 1973.

But in the meantime Changi will be the hardest hit of all 58 constituencies by the British forces' withdrawal. At present there is still plenty of activity in Changi. This is partly because the withdrawal is taking place from Changi airfield. By the end of November when it is closed down as an RAF station, and when Selarang Barracks are also handed back, the impact on Changi will be pronounced.

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Unlike Sembawang, where the dockyards, electrical, electronic and other light industries were set up from late 1968 onwards converting naval facilities to civilian use; or Seletar where there are now a Flying Training School, many private small aeroplanes making use of the airfield, and Lockheeds beginning its repair work; or Tengah Air Base which will be the Five-Power Air Force base; or Nee Soon where

the British, Australians and New Zealanders will be stationed, Changi will be completely vacated except for the hospital.

We had arranged for Lockheeds and Grummans to move into Changi. But the American economy affected their aerospace industry badly and Grummans have decided to postpone operations. We shall have only Lockheeds who will move into Changi from Seletar. Our own training squadron of the Air Defence Command will move to Changi. And our National Service battalions will move into Selarang Barracks and several RAF barracks in Changi. But our own pilots and soldiers do not have the same money, nor the same free spending habits of the British.

Some 2,000 people running the bars, bakery, provision shops, dry-cleaners and domestic servants, will be affected. Some 3,000 workers in the direct employ of the RAF in Changi will be redundant.

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Of the 18,000 redundant so far, about 4,000 have decided to return to their homes elsewhere, taking their redundancy benefits with them.

Out of the 3,000 direct employees and 2,000 indirect workers, 20% to 30% will go home. But we have to find employment for the rest. This will be solved, but not at once. The factories which are being built in Changi, like Plessey, Philips, Rollei, Beechams, take time to complete. Sophisticated equipment and machinery take time to install. Some time next year, workers will begin to be employed. But more blue than white collar workers. More workers will be employed in the ensuing years as these industries move to full production.

By the second half of the 1970's, Changi will boom like Jurong. In several ways it will be better than Jurong. It will become a centre for the manufacture of middle technology products, cameras, electronic goods, and for providing aeroplane repair, overhaul, and manufacture of aeroplane components. And they will be clean industries, air-conditioned, no smoke, or soot, nor too much noise, except for the airfield.

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These new industries require higher skills. So they can afford higher pay.

Workers will have to be trained to higher standards. Therefore, it is important that we must get our young well-trained for the jobs as quickly as possible.

But the worst hit, the middle-aged clerical workers who need reading glasses, will find it hard if not impossible to re-train. There is a shortage of workers, but not

of clerks or storekeepers. We shall find them other jobs, but they will not be as well paid.

Meanwhile, we will have to do some hard work to get the tourists to come up to Changi beach. We shall have to clean up the beaches all the way from Bedok right up to Changi point -- clean up the beach, cut out the water pollution, resettle the squatters and build attractive bathing, changing and other picnicking facilities. Then the tourists will come, as will many Singaporeans seeking a breath of fresh air, the sound of the sea and a change of scenery. It is my job, with your co-operation, to put things right.

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