

TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH OF WELCOME BY THE
PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA, MRS. INDIRA GANDHI, AT
THE STATE BANQUET GIVEN IN HONOUR OF THE PRIME
MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, IN NEW DELHI ON
22ND NOVEMBER, 1971

Mr. Prime Minister,

May I welcome you and Madame Lee here. And it is a great pleasure to have you with us -- a dynamic young leader of a dynamic young nation which has made tremendous progress. May I say, also, that we are specially delighted to have your charming daughter with us.

President Giri was your guest recently and he came back, full of admiration of what he saw and what he heard about your work and your country. We have taken a keen interest in your progress, not only progress of the economy and industry, but also what you have done in other spheres -- health and education. I had a very interesting talk with the Prime Minister about what they are doing in education and I think there is something we can learn from the experiment being carried out in Singapore.

Most of our visitors, those who returned from there, are specially interested by your housing scheme, some of which I saw myself when I was there. All these things are admirable and notable achievements. But, I think, perhaps the most important is the manner in which you have integrated the various people who live there. There are in the world, perhaps, two -- I think the world can be divided today into these two thoughts or two ways of living -- where there are the people who think that everybody should be put in the same mould and be uniform; and the others who think that diversity itself can lead to unity and indeed can be a source of strength. Both our countries, I think belong to this latter. It's because our people have the opportunity of expressing themselves, shall we say, in different languages, different religions, different cultures -- it seems paradoxical -- but I think that is what holds them together in some ways. If we try to force them into a pattern, I have no doubt that they would wish to break away.

National Archives of Singapore

Having an important visitor is always the occasion for discussing many things and our talks have ranged over many subjects -- politics, naturally, international affairs. You were kind enough to tell me what was happening in your country and I was specially interested in your assessment of what is happening in Asia. You have been an astute observer of the Asian scene and today, this scene is changing and so it was interesting and valuable for us to

know what you thought of the present situation; and also how you thought it might develop and what influences it could have on the different countries.

Asia is changing, so is Europe -- and in a different way. Though in both there is some attempt at breaking down of barriers -- even long-standing hostilities and hatreds. That's why I said -- on my trip recently -- that it was ironic that Europe which had been the scene of so many big world wars and so on, should now be moving towards peace. Whereas in Asia, two areas of conflict remain and a third is threatening and it is this threat from across our borders which also points to the idea which I mentioned earlier -- that every country has to consider the different cultural streams which exist within its frontiers and perhaps it was the negligence of this which is at the base of the present conflict across our borders. It also shows that you cannot make religion the basis of a nation. We had felt this from the beginning but now the world has proved it.

National Archives of Singapore

India, as you know is too large not to have problems and I think our problems are commensurate with our size, but perhaps we also have the strength, at least we certainly think we have, to deal with those problems. Our experience shows that you deal with one kind, then another kind crops up. But I think it is not very much different from other countries. We have different types of

problems, perhaps, but they nevertheless exist and will continue to exist so long as the world remains. In this matter-of-fact world, ideas are often ridiculed. But we felt here that ideals and commonness of purpose are bonds which keep a people together, which give coherence to a country and give it direction and therefore strengthen us. Of course, being human beings, we don't always live up to our ideals but I think it's nice to have them to look up to and as a guiding star.

We believe also that every country has something to learn from the others, even though conditions may be different. We can adapt. India throughout its long history, has been able to absorb much from other civilisations and cultures. And this was what has given richness to our heritage. So we welcome you here. We think there is friendship between our countries -- our talks have shown that there is similarity in outlook on many matters and we share some problems in common -- we share some ideas in common -- and I hope that our friendship will grow in strength, and I am sure it will be beneficial to our peoples.

So, once more, I would like to welcome you and your party and hope you will have a pleasant stay with us, and that we shall be partners, or shall I say, good companions in the journey towards these ideals, which I spoke earlier.

May I ask you all to drink to the health of the Prime Minister and Mrs. Lee, to the prosperity of Singapore and to friendship between us.

National Archives of Singapore