

Singapore Government

19 DEC 1985  
**PRESS RELEASE**

Information Division, Ministry of Communications & Information, City Hall, Singapore 0617 • Tel. 3307269 / 3307270 / 3307271

SS - PRL - 5

Release No.: 94/NOV  
05-4/85/11/29

**SPEECH BY MR PHUA BAH LEE, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY  
(DEFENCE), AT THE SINGAPORE ASSOCIATION OF SHIP SUPPLIERS  
ANNUAL DINNER HELD AT THE ROYAL HOLIDAY INN HOTEL  
ON FRIDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 1985 AT 8.00 PM**

When I was first approached to be your Guest-of-Honour at to-night's dinner, it was the first time I ever heard of your Association. Naturally, at that time I did not know anything about your Association or the business of its members. It is only when I tried to learn something about your Association and its members, that I realise that your Association has been in existence for four years, and that its members belong to a sector of the economy which is not only an important foreign exchange earner, but also play an important part in providing a part of the comprehensive services which Singapore as a major port has to provide.

Nowadays, when the emphasis is on high technology, and the spot-light focussed mostly on glamour industries such as those related to computers and bio-technology, one is often inclined to overlook trades and industries that are mundane. These may lack the glamour, but are no less important to the economy. For example, I was informed that sales revenue of the members of this Association amounted to about \$500 million per annum. As this amount is for goods and services provided to ships passing through, they are in the nature of exports. Your business is, therefore, not an unimportant contributor of our export earnings.

Your immediate-past President and your current President commented that during the present difficult phase of our economy, the Government could perhaps view more sympathetically with your problems than in the past. It has been widely publicised that the Government is prepared to

help businessmen where it can, and will be receptive to any reasonable suggestion you may have. This is where your Association could play its role to have your views heard.

While the Government may be expected to be helpful, more would have to depend on you, yourselves. The volume of your business depends on the number of ships calling at Singapore and the amount they purchase. The number of ships calling here will depend very much on the level of economic activity in the world. There is very little you can do about this. You can, however, do a lot to influence how much the ships, that do come, purchase from you. A lot of the goods required by ships can be purchased from here or other ports along their routes. These other ports are in fact your competitors for their business. It is, therefore, important that you establish Singapore with the reputation of being the best place to buy their supplies; a place where the service is reliable and efficient, where the goods supplied are good and the prices competitive. It is better to build up a good solid reputation for Singapore as the best port to get their requirements rather than to go for short term gains.

With this, I shall conclude my speech except to thank you for inviting me here and to wish your Association all the best for the future.

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