

PRESS RELEASE

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Remarks by Foreign Minister Prof S Jayakumar in Parliament, Thursday, 9 March 2000 on Singapore's Candidature for Non-Permanent Membership of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Because Singapore is in Asian Group seat and there is no viable Asian candidate competing with us, and the Asian Group earlier has endorsed Singapore's candidature as the Group's agreed candidate, I would say that the prospects of us being elected are very good. But we are not being complacent. We are continuing with all our efforts to talk to other countries in other regions to ensure that we have a good result when the voting takes place in the UN. But I'm reasonably confident that we will be elected and the election is for a 2 year term starting in January 2001.

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But I would like to say this. If we get elected, we should not get too carried away, as it does not mean that we have suddenly arrived or that for two years we will have some magical power status bestowed on us. That is not the case. During the two years on the UNSC and thereafter, we will still remain a small country. We cannot pretend to be otherwise.

I thought I should emphasise this. We should have a sense of proportion and not have any delusion that we are not a small country.

The reason I make this point is that yesterday, while I was listening to some of

the comments and questions, I thought that there is a little lack of proportion, a little lack of realism – for example, Singapore should send more military and peacekeeping missions, and expand the scope of our technical assistance, not just for human resource development, but to influence reforms, policies in other countries etc.

We need to come back to reality and remember that we are a small country with limited resources. We shall do our best to be active in foreign policy – to advance our interests, to be a responsible international citizen and to have constructive ideas on issues, whether in the region or in international organisations.

Mr Simon Tay asked how we could contribute to the UNSC. If we are elected to the UNSC, we will do our best to contribute to the work of the Council by bringing to it the perspective of a small state, and demonstrate wherever possible that a small state can also play a useful role in the Council. We will work with like-minded countries in the Council, including those from NAM or the G77, on issues of common interest. As the endorsed candidate of the Asian Group, we will also work with the Group to reflect their views and concerns in the Council.

Mr Simon Tay also asked if we would side with the big powers in the UNSC. Our record speaks for itself. In all these years, people considered Singapore to have taken positions on the basis of principle and that we have an independent foreign policy. We shall continue to do so when we are in the UNSC, or even when we are not in the UNSC.

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