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MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE

Statement by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Menzies

Details of the separation arrangements being now available, Ministers have today been studying the implications of the establishment of Singapore as a State separate from and independent of Malaysia.

I feel that I need to say at the outset that no prior consultation or discussion with the Australian Government took place. But the separation having occurred, we fully accept it, and direct ourselves to the future.

The changes that have taken place flow from considerations of internal political relationships between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. It was recognised in the negotiations preceding the establishment of Malaysia that special arrangements were necessary for the incorporation of Singapore in the Federation. The structural changes now agreed upon reflect an assessment on the part of the parties concerned that those special arrangements have proved unworkable. We regret deeply that it was not found possible to make a full success of the Federation as established in 1963, but at the same time we are glad that the new arrangement recognises that the two entities must continue to work together in close association. We, for our part, apply ourselves with all goodwill to co-operation with both Malaysia and Singapore for their future security and welfare, since we believe, as they do, that this separation should be regarded as the beginning of a new approach to the task of working together to forward their common interests.

Various aspects of the separation will require examination in some detail by the Australian Government and, no doubt, in some instances, consultation with other Governments, including the Governments of Singapore and Malaysia will take place.

A central and most important matter is the continued and combined defence of the region. Malaysia and Singapore face the same defence problems, and Singapore's facilities are involved in the defence of both. We welcome the agreement of the two Governments to establish machinery for ensuring a common defence effort. We hope that this will be set up with speed, and that it will be effective. The particular Australian association with this common defence will require study in the light of the new circumstances. But we are determined to play our part with all the other countries concerned in continuing a common resistance to attacks upon the Malaysian area, an area which will still include Singapore, though it is no longer part of the Federation of Malaysia.

I have today sent messages to the Prime Ministers of Singapore and Malaysia expressing our satisfaction in that the new arrangements provide for continued co-operation between the two States in many fields, including economic affairs as well as defence.

The Australian Government has recognised the State of Singapore and I have informed the Singapore Prime Minister that we will be happy to establish full diplomatic relations with Singapore at the level of High Commissioner, and that we wish Singapore well in its new sovereignty and look forward to a continuance of close and friendly relations with the new State and with Malaysia.

CANBERRA,
10th August, 1965.