

Transcript of PM Lee Hsien Loong's Speech
Launch of Clean and Green Singapore 2007
Bishan Park, 3 Nov 07

Mr Zainuddin Nordin, Mayor of Central Singapore District

Ministers

Distinguished Guests

Friends

I am delighted to join you this morning to launch the Clean and Green Singapore Programme. I think our chillis and bawangs work very well, we have very good weather this evening. Congratulations, to the Chilli and Bawang people.

Singapore has come a very long way in environmental protection. We were “greenies”, practical “greenies”, long before it came popular to be one, and our focus was on protecting the environment at all levels.

So, when we take care of the environment in Singapore, we must worry about what happens within the country, our own living place, what happens with our neighbours and our region, and also what happens globally – the climate change which affects the whole of the world.

Let me say something about each one of these, starting where we live in Singapore.

The first thing we must do is to protect our local environment. We have a small island, 700 sq kilometres, that's all we have, if we mess it up, there is no where else we can go. We live here, we play here, we have our families here, and we enjoy our lives here, and we must make it a special and unique place which all of us can enjoy.

Therefore, we have to uphold stringent standards of environmental protection in Singapore, whether it's emissions from factories and vehicles - no chimneys with black smoke, no exhaust pipes with black exhaust. Whether it's our rivers and our waters – we don't want any pollution in it, so we have cleaned up the Singapore River and now we are making a further major effort, to clean up, to renovate and improve the sewers in the city area, so that Marina Bay, when it becomes a bay, will be clean, beautiful and we can enjoy water sports in it.

And we also must protect our urban environment. You saw a few bits of litter on the stage just now, one or two banana skins. But there is a lot more than banana skins which Singaporeans litter, and which has to be picked up every day. And they tell me that they pick up 100 tonnes of rubbish per day – not from the rubbish chutes and the markets - but from public areas and it will go into the Singapore River or the Kallang River. Every month, we remove close to 30

tonnes of flotsam floating down the river, meaning it probably went in from, maybe from Ang Mo Kio, maybe from Bishan, all the way sail down to the Singapore harbour, and picked up by MEWR.

So, we have to take care of this. First of all, don't litter. Secondly, if it's littered, we will clean it up. But I think we will try and find who was responsible and we will put a stop to this.

But it's not just cleaning up litter but also beautifying and transforming Singapore into a city of gardens and water. So that's why we have the ABC Programme – Active, Beautiful and Clean Waters Programme. And we are going to have projects all over Singapore, including in Bishan Park, to redevelop them over the next three or four years, and make it something special, something unusual, something which we will all enjoy.

So we'll have clean water, flowing rivers, we'll have plants along the water, marsh gardens, and bring back the greenery into our city.

But to maintain this, everybody has to play his part, in our public areas, in our parks, in our water bodies. And that is a challenge for Singapore – to keep our island clean and pristine.

But not all of the pollution comes from Singapore. Some of the pollution which we see, come from beyond our borders and the haze

which was such a major problem last year, is one major example of trans-border pollution.

So, we have to watch trans-border pollution too. First of all, we must make sure we don't cause any trans-border pollution to our neighbours and no environmental problems should be exported to them. So, for example, although we have sewage treatment works, we treat the sewage to a high standard before we allow the effluent to be discharged into the seas. We don't discharge raw sewage or half-processed stuff into the seas in the hope that it will just sail off and go somewhere else.

And we hope that our neighbours also will adopt a similar responsible approach. Sometimes, problems will arise as there was with the haze last year, in which case we will have to work bilaterally with our neighbours to settle the matter. And also cooperate with them within the framework of ASEAN, to tackle trans-border problems in the region.

So, we have an ASEAN Treaty on Haze Control, and we also have a cooperation with Jambi province in Indonesia to help Jambi province combat forest fires and therefore reduce the haze generated from Jambi, which if the wind is right, will blow to Singapore. And I think we are signing the MOU, with them, within the next few days.

So, within the region, with our neighbours, we have to be good neighbours. In the world, when we meet global environmental

problems like climate change, we have to be responsible global citizens.

Climate change affects all of us and, and we can already see it happening in the world around us. Extreme weather events, more frequent and severe natural disasters, major floods and droughts, polar ice caps melting, the glaciers melting, sea levels rising, longer and hotter seasons ... summers in the sub-temperate zones, and in Singapore too, we can't be sure, but it feels like the weather is changing on us.

So far, the changes have been moderate but noticeable but if countries don't do something about it, the situation is gradually going to get worse. This is not a problem that comes overnight but this is also not a problem which can be solved overnight because there is a long lead time before anything which we can do will affect the climate.

And therefore, we have to project what's going to happen in 10, 20, 50 years from now and decide what we need to do today. Not by ourselves but together with other countries in the world. No country can solve this problem on its own. It's a problem for all the countries in the world, all of mankind, collectively, and we have to solve it together.

I think the governments of the world are starting to take this problem seriously. Last month or two months ago, I was in Sydney for the APEC Conference and the countries surprisingly agreed to aim

for a 25% reduction in energy intensity by 2030. In other words, for every dollar of GDP produced, to consume one-quarter less energy than they are now doing. And the countries agreed to this and issued a declaration.

It's only an aspirational target, that means I will try my best, I hope to succeed, if not, there are no penalties. And it is only energy intensity, meaning my GDP will go up but my pollution per unit GDP will come down. So the total amount of CO2 which is produced may well go up, probably will, but it is a first step towards recognizing that this is a problem, and setting targets, and acknowledging that we need to set targets in order to deal with it.

This month, we are going to have the ASEAN and East Asia Summits in Singapore. Singapore is hosting, all the leaders will be coming. Climate change will be a key item on the agenda. And this will lead up to a big UN Conference on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will be held in Bali in December. So the countries are discussing this problem and Singapore, we will have to do our part.

We can't volunteer to take drastic measures to reduce emissions on our own, at the cost of our economy and our economic growth because this is not a problem which any country can do by itself. If we say we stop producing, the benefits don't accrue to Singapore, the benefits accrue to other countries in the world. And even if we stop producing altogether, the total impact on the world will

be very small. We contribute less than 0.2% of all the carbon emissions worldwide – 0.2% -- so what we do in Singapore is not going to change the world.

And just to get a sense of it, even if we shut down the whole of Singapore -- no lights, no fans, no air-conditions, no cars, buses, MRTs, nothing. The amount of carbon saved, not generated, will be the same as three days of energy consumption in China. So, it is not possible for us to solve this problem but we can't say, therefore, we ignore it. We will do our fair share as part of a global effort to reduce greenhouse gases.

There's a treaty now which is the Kyoto Protocol, it's not very effective, many loopholes, and not going to work. But it was the first treaty, signed in Kyoto a few years ago, and it will expire in 2012. The key question is what will come after the Kyoto Protocol. The negotiations will begin and we have to contribute to the negotiations, and do our best to be constructive, at the same time, to safeguard our national interests.

We are special in Singapore, we are especially vulnerable, we are totally dependent on fossil fuels, there's no feasible alternative. We have no hydro-electric power, we have no wind power, we have no geo-thermal, if you make a hole in the ground, there's no hot water underneath there, except in Mandai, there's one spot. We can't do a nuclear power plant between Ang Mo Kio and Bishan. It is not

possible. So, we have to use fossil fuels – gas, petrol, fuel oil. And that put us at a disadvantage.

At the same time, we are a major manufacturing base for multinationals, and the products from our factories are not consumed in Singapore, they are exported to China, to India, to America, to Europe, so when you account for the CO₂ which the factories produce, I don't think it is fair to account for it on our account. Because it is consumed in those countries and they should account for it.

Also, we are a major air and sea hub. Every year, I think 30 million people fly through Changi Airport. Every year, we have 25-something million containers shipped through Singapore – ships taking on bunker fuel in Singapore. These are not Singapore consumption, these are international but it happen to upload in Singapore -- the fuel -- so we have to account for this fairly and if there's a treaty, we have to make sure that it's all not put on to our account. Because that's not fair and it doesn't make sense.

So, therefore, this is a problem which is not just one ministry's problem and it affects the environment of course, but also trade and industry, also finance, also foreign affairs. So therefore I have set up a Ministerial Committee, on Climate Change, and it is chaired by the DPM, Professor Jayakumar, to coordinate our efforts and make sure that Singapore is looked after into the new phase, when there's a post-Kyoto climate change treaty.

We have to start preparing for this future now and we have to know what it means. It is not going to be painless. Because to cut emissions, it means that you have to consume less fossil fuels. It means that energy prices will have to go up.

Already, oil prices are very high, because high growth in China and India is pushing up demand for energy. I think oil is at US\$96 a barrel, may well touch US\$100 a barrel. But if countries are going to shift away from fossil fuels, and move to more expensive alternatives, I believe energy prices will go up even higher, have to, because otherwise the consumption will not come down. And that means we have to redouble efforts to consume energy and we have to get used to less wasteful habits.

So whether you are watching Manchester United on the big screen tonight, or whether you are just having an evening out with your boyfriend or girlfriend or family, don't turn up the air-con so cold that you have to put on a sweater. Don't turn up your stereo so loud that you have to have ear plugs. Save energy, use what you need, not more. And do yourself a favour, at the same time avoid worsening this problem.

The Ministry of Environment and Water Resources have announced the National Energy Efficiency Masterplan. You've watched it, I think it's been on TV. The government will take the lead to push for more energy efficiency in Singapore and we will tighten

regulations to make our buildings more energy efficient. And we will work with industries to set standards and promote best practices in energy efficiency, to do the best we can. Because although we improved over the years, I think there's a lot more we can do which is sensible to do, just to make our buildings more efficient, our transport more free flowing, our consumption less wasteful. And it can be done.

The Japanese have shown how it can be done. They are much more efficient than we are but they have in a much bigger effort starting earlier from the 1970s. And I think we should learn from them and from every other country which has had experience doing this.

Households can make a difference. Start by taking simple and effective measures. For example, choose energy efficient appliances --- washing machines, refrigerators, air-conditioners. We now have a green labelling scheme. I asked Yaacob what it means. He says it's very simple. You just look at the ticks on the labels and the more ticks on the label, the better it is, the greener it is. So, for example, you can switch to energy-saving light bulbs, they cost more but they last longer, they consume less energy and overall they save you quite a lot of money, like 20-30% less than you would need to spend if you bought the ordinary old light bulbs.

So, if you cultivate these saving habits, you will spend less on utilities bills, and also help to reduce the impact on the environment. So whether it's a Singapore problem, whether it's a problem with our neighbours, regional, whether it's a global problem like climate

change, we would like every Singaporean to care for the environment -- make the effort, make a difference.

So, to reinforce this message, we've decided to revamp the Clean and Green Programme. Instead of a Clean and Green Week or a Clean and Green Month, we will have clean and green activities throughout the year, because this is something that we want people to remember all the time. And we want to encourage Singaporeans to adopt environmentally friendly actions and lifestyles. And together we can improve our living environment and raise the quality of life for Singaporeans.

We are already special, if you compare Singapore to any other country in this region. You look at it from outer space, it looks different. You look at it on the ground, it also looks different. You cross the border – whether you land by air, whether you come by sea, whether you come by road - you know when you have arrived in Singapore. It's clean, it's looked after, it's green, it's beautiful and it's environmentally friendly, and it's a place where people can live happy, safe, healthy lives. And that's what we would like Singapore to be.

So, on that note, I declare this Clean and Green Campaign open. Thank you very much.

(18 mins, 50 secs)