

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
ON THE MOTION OF LEAVE OF ABSENCE OF
MEMBERS AT THE DEWAN RAKYAT¹ ON 25TH
APRIL, 1961

Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move,

That the leave of the House under Article 52 of the Constitution shall be given to, and may be signified by Mr Speaker in the case of, any member of the House of Representatives whose absence thereunder has been approved by Mr Speaker:

Provided that Mr Speaker shall report to the House the name of every member to whom such leave has been given.

Sir, under Article 52 of the Constitution this House may declare the seat of a Member vacant if two conditions are fulfilled: first, that the Member is absent without leave of the House for a period of six months, and second, if the House passes a resolution declaring the seat of such a Member to be vacant.

The normal method by which this House expresses its views is of course, Sir, by means of a resolution. In the case of the granting of leave of absence, however, such a method is, in my view, extremely cumbersome, and it is accordingly proposed, by the motion now before the House, that Mr Speaker shall be empowered to give leave to a Member, provided that he makes a due report thereof at the next sitting of the House.

Now, Sir, this motion will not, if adopted, imply that a Member obtaining the leave of Mr Speaker may not have his seat declared vacant, for the power to do this rests under the Constitution with this House, and no other authority. It will, however, enable a Member to obtain an early reply to a request for leave of absence for six months or more; and only if Mr Speaker is unwilling to give such leave on behalf of the House will there be any likelihood of a formal resolution being brought before the House: for Article 52 does not, as I have indicated, automatically create a vacancy.

1 Penggal Ketiga Dewan Rakyat yang Pertama.

Now, Sir, the practice in various Parliaments in the world varies. In the United Kingdom House of Commons leave of absence for a Member is not now normally required by, or given to a Member. In the Singapore Legislative Assembly the permission of the Speaker of the Assembly is sufficient authority for the purpose. All in all, Sir, I venture to suggest that the House is prepared to rely on your good sense and discretion in this matter, subject to the House being duly informed of which Members will be absent from its deliberations. The House is prepared to leave this matter to you, Sir.

This, Sir, is essentially, therefore, a motion designed to facilitate the prompt despatch of the affairs of the House, and therefore it is a business motion; and as such I commend it for adoption by this House.

Sir, I beg to move.