

BIG POWERS URGED TO GUARANTEE NEUTRALITY OF SMALL NATIONS

That it is in the interests of the big powers to guarantee the integrity, independence and neutrality of the small countries in South East Asia was emphasised by Tun Abdul Razak, when he spoke in Dewatt Ra'ayat on 23rd January, 1969, in moving the expenditure for the Ministry of Defence for 1969. His speech follows.

I beg to move the expenditure for the Ministry of Defence shown under Head B 14 totalling \$257,542,668 be approved.

Sir. Hon'ble Members may have noticed that the amount voted for our defence expenditure for 1969 shows only an overall increase of \$5.58 million over that of 1968. This small increase is merely to make provision for increase in personal emoluments on account of normal annual salary increment and also for the implementation of the approved increase of pay and allowances to all non-commissioned officers and other ranks of the Armed Forces. In actual fact. Hon'ble Members will have noticed that the allocation for personal emoluments in 1969 is \$1.58 million more than that of last year, although only an overall increase of \$5.58 million was shown in the Estimates.

Sir. this small increase in expenditure does not mean that we are reducing the strength of our Armed Forces or its efficiency. On the contrary, we are steadily strengthening our Armed Forces and also increasing its efficiency and effectiveness.

Sir. I would like to explain that we are in the midst of reviewing our defence policy and planning. For the last 25 years since the end of World War Two. the pattern of defence of Malaysia and Singapore area was determined by the British, assisted by Australia and New Zealand. With the decision of the British to withdraw their forces by the end of 1971, it is necessary to review the whole defence structure of this region and in consultation with

our other allies. Australia and New Zealand and Singapore, to formulate new defence arrangements. It is vital in the national interest for us to ensure that the defence and security of our country are fully safeguarded and it is our Government's policy to do everything possible towards this end.

As my colleague, the Hon'ble Minister of Finance, said in moving this Budget no economic or social development can take place without security. Indeed, Sir, if a country can be compared to a river; the two banks are one, defence and security, and the other, economic stability. The two banks of this river must be kept strong if it is intended that the water should flow freely and that the country should prosper.

Any defence planning must be viewed in the light of likely threats, both internal and external, to the security and stability of this region. The political situation in Southeast Asia is still fluid and the pattern of the future is by no means clear. There are still imponderables and uncertain factors which, at the moment, are difficult to judge or predict with any accuracy. No one can predict with any degree of certainty the outcome of the war in **Vietnam**, though lately the prospect of peace is brighter with the agreement by all sides to begin negotiations with an enlarged representation in Paris. It is not clear what the position of the new Administration in the United States will be if and when this Vietnam war can be settled peacefully.

Also, we are not clear what is the attitude of the big powers towards this region, in particular, Communist China. If we can succeed in convincing Communist China that the policy of peaceful co-existence in this region is in the interests of all concerned—big powers as well as small powers—and that it is in the interest of the big powers to guarantee the integrity, independence and neutrality of the small countries in Southeast Asia, then clearly we can look forward to a period of peace and stability in this region. Consequently, it will not be necessary for us to spend vast sums of money on defence but we could continue to devote **our** energies and resources on peaceful economic development.

Again, we have this unhappy and unfortunate situation in regard to our relations with our immediate neighbour, the Philippines. We are still uncertain what the attitude of the Philippines is—how far they intend to pursue their claim to Sabah. Whatever it is, it is our duty to be prepared for all eventualities and to take adequate measures to defend our territories, in particular, Sabah. In this respect, I should like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Sabah Government for their generous contribution to the defence expenditure incurred in that State. This is certainly a conclusive proof that the people of Sabah are solidly behind the Government in their desire to remain in Malaysia.

In view of all these, Sir, it is somewhat premature to be conclusive in our future defence plan. But one thing is certain—that we must now rely on our own resources for the defence of our country. We shall have to continue to expand our Armed Forces, our Army, Navy and Air Force, and we must have a well-trained, highly mobile and effective Army, Navy and Air Force, capable of withstanding any limited form of aggression against our country. Of course, for a small country like Malaysia, it is not possible for us to go it alone if confronted with a general or global world situation or if we are attacked by a big power. That is why, when the British announced their decision to withdraw their forces from this region, we asked for a meeting of the five powers closely concerned with the defence of Malaysia and Singapore, i.e. Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia, to take counsel and discuss problems of joint defence.

We feel that both Singapore and Malaysia need to be assisted in our defence and we consider it is necessary to establish this concept of collective defence arrangements. That is why we had the 5-Power Ministerial Conference on Defence in May and another Conference in May this year in Canberra. In the meantime, various Working Groups of the five countries have been discussing detailed arrangements which will be submitted for consideration of the Ministerial Conference. It is, therefore, important for us to know what the intentions of our partners are.

The British, of course, have made their decision; Australia and New Zealand have announced that they will remain in Singapore and Malaysia until the end of 1971. However, it is desirable that we should know the long-term policy of both Australia and New Zealand in order to enable us to formulate a real defence arrangement for ourselves and also for Singapore.

This has become of even greater relevance now that the Australian and New Zealand Governments have decided to transfer their ground forces from Terendak to Singapore. We do not know the motivations and considerations which governed this move of the Australian and New Zealand Governments, but this somewhat sudden decision has certainly given rise to various speculations as regards the ultimate intentions of these two countries in respect of the defence of Malaysia and Singapore.

However, it should be emphasised that the intentions of Australia and New Zealand in this field beyond the end of 1971 is a matter of considerable importance to us in that this decision would have to be taken into account in our future defence planning.

We are accused of holding old world views because we are always frank with our friends and we believe in telling them clearly and frankly where their best interests lie. Our record in the past can clearly prove that we had been sincere and honest with our friends and we intend to continue to do so. We also believe in the principle that if we have obligations to our friends we should discharge these obligations fully until we are relieved of these obligations and we expect our friends also to reciprocate them. In subscribing to this belief I do not see how we can be accused of having old world views whatever they may mean.

Let this be clear, we are not persuading our friends to come to our assistance merely to defend us for our own sake. Our friends in this area must decide and decide quickly in the light of their own enlightened self-interests. We know that we occupy a vital position not only in this region of Southeast Asia but for the whole Asia and for Australia and New Zealand, not only economically but strategically. We also stand for freedom, peace

and friendship among countries in this part of the world. We therefore fully realise the vital importance of our position in the defence of this region as well as in the defence of countries which believe in freedom and of choosing their own way of life. We also know that there will be friends who will come to our defence should the need arise. We also realise that in the final analysis, we must depend on our own resources and strength for the defence of our country.

All these developments underline the fact that we have to be more self-reliant as a nation and this in fact means that on the one hand we may have to step up our defence expenditure and, on the other, our people must accept this as a challenge to our will and determination to meet our new additional defence responsibilities.

Hon'ble Members might have heard lately of our announcement to purchase some fighter aircraft from France, and also military equipments. As I have stated, it must be our policy to expand our Armed Forces. At the moment, our Air Force has the capability of providing effective air support to our ground forces in operation and also we have adequate air transport facilities. But it is necessary for us to have an Air Force that is capable of striking at the enemies should they attempt to aggress our country against any possible air attack. The Navy is also being expanded and, in the course of the year, we hope our second modernised frigate will be completed and commissioned.

Now, Sir, while we are reviewing and planning for the future defence of our country and considering ways and means of expanding and strengthening our Armed Forces to ensure we have adequate forces to defend our independence and integrity against any limited acts of aggression we have to bear in mind the limited financial resources of our country. That is why the Ministry of Defence has made an all-out effort to eliminate wasteful expenditure and to keep down cost. It is proposed to reduce the number of personnel on training courses overseas, except, of course, for those who are undergoing technical courses, the facilities of which are not available here. But wherever possible, we will provide training facilities locally for our Armed Forces.

We are happy with the efficiency and effectiveness of our defence forces and the loyalty of our men. We will continue to increase training facilities and to equip them with modern weapons. We hope that our friends, not only from the Commonwealth, but outside, i.e. countries who value the stability and security of this rich and important part of the world, i.e. Southeast Asia, will not hesitate to give us the limited assistance we need in the field of defence. As I have stated, however much we decide to increase the strength of the Armed Forces, we will not be able to defend our country adequately from external aggression. We need friends to assist us if we are confronted with aggression by a big power. However, we hope and trust that by our policy of friendship and goodwill towards other nations, and by our efforts to bring about real co-operation in this region of Southeast Asia, we would be able not only to bring the countries of Southeast Asia closer together for mutual benefit and for the peace and stability of this region, but also to show to the big powers that we would like to be left alone in the pursuit of our way of life. We hope and trust the big powers will understand and realise that it is in the interests of all concerned, that all countries, whether big or small, should respect each other's independence and sovereignty, and, in particular, it is the wish of the countries that our independence, integrity and neutrality of this region of Southeast Asia should be guaranteed.

Sir. I beg to move.

A GOOD IMAGE ABROAD

Malaysia has travelled a long way since independence 11 years ago. As a rapidly developing nation we have a good image abroad and the way in which we are managing our affairs has earned us respect of both big and small nations.

This was clearly evident from the warm and cordial reception which my delegation and I received wherever we went. The leaders of these countries expressed their appreciation of the way in which we looked after our country and managed our efforts both internally and externally. As a small country, this is something we can really be proud of

— *Tun Razak on his return from a tour of Europe.*