

CHALLENGES FACED BY OUR FOUNDING LEADERS

When Singapore achieved self-governance in 1959, the living environment was disorderly and unhygienic.

Hawkers and vendors sold food in unsanitary conditions. They disposed of waste in the streets where livestock roamed and down litter-clogged drains that frequently overflowed. Refuse was not regularly cleared and the city lacked a proper sanitation system.

Against this backdrop, Singapore was rapidly becoming more urbanised and industrialised. There was an urgency to establish an economy through rapid industrialisation, create jobs, develop housing, restore sanitation, build schools and attend to many more pressing issues.

1959



Construction works in Singapore, 1959.
Photo credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection,
courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

1950



View of bumboats on the Singapore River, 1950.
Photo credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection,
courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

1959



Volunteer workers at North Bridge Road children's playground, 1959.
Photo credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection,
courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

1956



Road construction in a rural area, 1956.

Photo credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

1964



Barges and sampans on the Singapore River with Elgin Bridge in the background, 1964.

Photo credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

1965



Laying water pipes, 1965.

Photo credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Scenes of Singapore just before independence in 1965

1959



During the dry season, the Rural Board would supply drinking water to rural areas using water wagons, 1959.

Photo credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

1962



Chinatown Market, 1962.

Photo credit: Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore