

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY PRESIDENT S R NATHAN AT THE TEA RECEPTION HOSTED BY THE EURASIAN
ASSOCIATION ON SAT 25 SEP 99 AT 3.00 PM AT THE COMMUNITY HOUSE

National Archives of Singapore

1. I am delighted to be here today to thank each and everyone of you for your support and good wishes on my election as the 6th President of Singapore.
2. Yours is a small community. Especially when compared to the much larger communities that form multi-racial Singapore. You have your own traditions, which form a deeply-rooted part of our multi-cultural society and, as large a claim, for a place among every other community. In the early days of our independence and, more so perhaps, in early pre-independence days, there was a period when a few among your community could have had some sense of loss of place in a rapidly evolving Singapore. That is no longer so today. What has happened is that the development of Singapore since independence has made Eurasians who live in Singapore comfortable with the environment in which they are raised. The increasing internationalisation and globalisation as well as the use of English had prevented the emergence of a

sense of alienation.

3. You should be proud that members of your Community did indeed play a very significant role in the progress of Singapore, to independence and beyond. Eurasians were in fact active players in our political process and in the adaptation of inherited institutions to meet changing political circumstances and needs. Several Eurasians gave their heart and soul to the anti-colonial struggle and in the building of the early foundations of the Singapore we now live in.

4. You need only recall the illustrious Eurasians who stood with the rest as part of that forward movement which helped to form and shape independent Singapore. Names, for instance, like Mr E W Barker, your Patron, the late K M Byrne, Gerald D' Cruz and Professor Maurice Baker, were and still are household names.

5. In the Public Service, there were as well the many who contributed to building the foundations for many Singapore institutions. The late Stanley Stewart, George Bogaars, John Le Cain, Brigadier-General Campbell are but a few examples of those who, together with your Trustee - Mr Herman Hochstadt - contributed towards development of the Civil Service, Armed Forces, and the Police. Not to mention Prof Benjamin Sheares, our 2nd President, who was a man of distinction, not only in his profession, but also among all Singaporeans.

6. Looking back, their contributions towards the building of Independent Singapore are indeed worth recalling. It will help younger Eurasians, as well as all other Singaporeans, appreciate what you as a Community have contributed to the development of Singapore.

7. Your community, though small, is an integral part of this land. It has adapted to changing circumstances, as have all other communities, beyond just style of dress or habit. There is now a growing spirit in your Community for a desire to work together among yourselves and with the rest of all Singaporeans for your own upliftment and that of Singapore as a whole. While we have distinctive communities in Singapore there is also a growing sense of what distinguishes us as Singaporeans.

8. The Eurasian Association is to be congratulated for providing leadership in bringing the Community together in a strength of purpose for the future rather than wallowing in a sense of alienation, that may have been generated in some, arising from greater stress on ethnicity among certain factions in Singapore. With the goals you have set on education and the action you are taking, a more vibrant and self-confident Eurasian Community that will have a much greater influence on Singapore Society, will emerge. Towards this goal, the new Eurasian community house you are planning should, when it is up, be a visible reminder to what your Community has achieved and aspires to achieve.

9. My best wishes to you for all your endeavours.

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