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# Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

Information Division, Ministry of Culture, City Hall, Singapore 0617 • tel. 3378191 ext. 352, 353, 354/3362207/3362271

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**SPEECH BY DR GOH KENG SWEE, FIRST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND  
MINISTER OF EDUCATION, AT THE KRETA AYER NATIONAL DAY  
CELEBRATION DINNER AT KRETA AYER  
ON MONDAY, 6 AUGUST 1984 AT 8.00 PM**

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This year, Singaporeans are celebrating 25 years of progress under PAP. We have achieved material progress and improved living standards beyond what anyone in 1959 would have thought possible. How was this done? Different people will give different answers. I will give my own explanation in terms of four factors:-

- (i) Our neighbours
- (ii) Our priorities
- (iii) Our models
- (iv) Our people.

Let me explain.

Our neighbours:

We have two neighbours - Malaysia and Indonesia. These have achieved fast economic growth since 1965 and as a result enjoyed political stability. We have prospered together with them, making this region one of the fastest growth regions in the world, attracting investments from the major industrial countries. May our two neighbours always remain prosperous.

Our priorities:

We have accepted as a hard fact of life that nobody owes Singapore a living. A small country with no natural resources must make the best use of human talent. This means continuous improvement of human skills - better and keener managements, a vigorous and productive work-force.

We cannot afford the wayward habits of some developing countries nor the easy-going attitudes that are growing in some rich countries.

#### Our models:

There is nothing new under the sun - whether it is setting up an MRT system, a gifted education programme, an Air Force, a container port or whatever. We do not try to re-invent the wheel; we study how other people do it. We learn and adapt, not imitate without thinking.

For many years, since the mid-1960s, our biggest worry was trade union and management relations. We inherited the British system which we knew to be flawed. Finally we saw great merit in the Japanese system of industrial relations which stressed the common interest of unions and management to advance the interest of the enterprise. The model of adversary relation found in many industrial countries is not for us.

While we have great respect for the achievements of the West in science and technology, music, literature and the arts, we believe that some of their social and political institutions and practices are not suitable models for Singapore. Some young returned students think otherwise, but they will grow wise with the passage of time.

#### Our people:

When all is said and done, it is people who matter. Singaporeans are a diligent and honest people. Given the opportunity to learn, they will improve themselves. They do care for their children's education and they want their children to do better than themselves. Given this admirable attitude on the part of our people, the spectacular advances in living standards we achieved in 25 years is perhaps not so surprising.

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