

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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Speech by Mr Zainul Abidin Rasheed, Senior Parliamentary Secretary

(Foreign Affairs) and MP for Cheng San GRC (Punggol East) at the Punggol East National Day Dinner, on Sunday, 8th August, 1999, at 7.50pm, at the Punggol Park, Hougang Avenue 10.

Mr Lee Yock Suan, Minister for Information and the Arts and Environment, and MP for Cheng San GRC, my other Cheng San GRC colleagues, Mr Heng Chiang Meng, Dr Michael Lim (& Mrs), and Mr Yeo Guat Kwang, former MP for Punggol, Mr Ng Kah Ting JP BBM (L) (& Mrs), CCC patrons Mr Alloysius Lim and Hj Abd Jaleel, Punggol East and neighbouring Cheng San School Principals, community leaders, Grassroots activists, Residents, generous sponsors, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good evening and thank you very much for making time to join us to celebrate our 34th National Day together.

Welcome and please relax and feel like home. Punggol East is a place for harmony, and in harmony. That's why we chose to have our dinner here at the Park. I call it our Park View National Day Dinner.

Before I proceed with my English speech, allow me first to say a few words in the other languages.

[Speech in Malay]

Chinese

Ta chia wan sung hou?

Each time I visit the residents and I hear "Mei Wen Ti", I am happy.

But I must confess, learning Mandarin is not easy. "Yu wen ti".

It's a rich language. So I don't want to spoil it by speaking it. I'll just say:

Ta chia nih hou. Ching wan / wo hern kow xin / chian dow ni men.

Xie Xie Ni.

Tamil

Thamil en thai molee illahvittalum, Thamil oru sirantha molee endru yenakku theriyum.

Ponggolil vaalum yellah rukkum vanakkam.

Ungalukku vei ndiya yellah vasathiyum naan seiyya kadamai pattu irukki rain. Nandri vanakkam.

I know that Tamil is a very fine language, so don't allow me to spoil it by speaking it poorly.

I am most happy to see you. We want to do all we can to make Punggol East a better place to live in. Do support us. Rumba sandoshen.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is the Singapore we are proud to call Our Home. Multi-racial, multi-religious, and multi-lingual, but we are determined to live in harmony. We take our diversity as our strength.

Singapore had humble beginnings. But we can see with our own eyes what hard work, discipline, cohesiveness, good governance, honest and clean government have given us. But we must of course not take our prosperity and success for granted. So stable and solid were and are our fundamentals that we have been able to weather the

recent financial crisis well.

Thanks to the support of the people of Singapore, our workers in particular, we were able to turn around faster than originally thought possible. Our workers' sacrifice, in cutting the CPF contributions and even their salaries in some places, will be remembered and appreciated.

We must however not easily rest on our laurels. There are still many uncertainties around. Many challenges to overcome.

Globalisation is very much with us, bringing with it new challenges as competition gets keener. We cannot survive with old tools and skills. We will have to constantly be on the move, upskilling, training and retraining.

We always have to be a step or two, if not more, ahead. To remain static is to decline. We will have to help each other, checking ourselves and not to allow complacency to set in.

We simply have to continue to work hard and push ourselves to new heights. That's the rule of the game if we want to continue to excel.

Continue to progress, indeed, we must but it must also be done in harmony. That's why we have chosen "Progress in Harmony" as our Punggol East motto or slogan. We want to help our residents live cohesively as one united people, regardless of race, language and religion.

We want to help those in need too. From the year 2,000, after a successful fund raising year, as mentioned by the CC Chairman, Mr Sunny Leow, we will introduce the Punggol East CCC Welfare Fund Bursaries from next year, Year 2,000. We are setting aside \$20,000 a year to give out in bursaries for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary levels. Details will be announced later.

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We would like to welcome the new year and the new century with promises of better things to come. With more Grassroots Organisations now in place and active in Punggol East, we will be able to do more for residents.

As we approach the new knowledge-based economy, we hope all Singaporeans will be on the alert to remain nimble, proactive and upgrade as we go along to meet the challenges of growing competition.

Our GROs will be preparing themselves to help where we can. Our programmes will also be geared in the same direction. Whether in skills upgrading, or developing new skills, we will be there to facilitate. More than just skills, we will also be doing more to provide better bonding. After all, we want "Progress in Harmony" as our guiding principle in development.

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In these days of KBE and thinking societies, let me close with a quote from Confucius:

If one learns from others but does not think, one will
be bewildered.

If one thinks but does not learn, one will be in peril.

On that note, Thank You once again. Xie Xie, Rumba Nandri, and Terima Kasih.

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