

**TOAST BY
PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEN LOONG
AT THE OFFICIAL LUNCH HOSTED IN HONOUR
OF HIS EXCELLENCY DR MANMOHAN SINGH,
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA,
AT THE ISTANA ON
SUNDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2011 AT 1245 HRS**

Your Excellency Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh

Madam Gursharan Kaur

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

1 May I wish a very warm welcome to Prime Minister Singh, Madam Gursharan Kaur, and your delegation to Singapore. Prime Minister Singh is no stranger to Singapore, having visited Singapore several times in the past. I am delighted to welcome you back.

2 Singapore-India relations go back centuries. In the modern era, Indian merchants were among the first to develop commercial links with Singapore and Southeast Asia back in the 19th and early-20th centuries. Many Indians started families here, integrated into the wider community and made important contributions to Singapore's development as a multi-cultural society and cosmopolitan economy.

3 Singapore-India relations have strengthened steadily. Today they comprise several pillars: economic investments and trade; political and security dialogue; defence relations; as well as educational and cultural exchanges.

4 Trade and investment flows between Singapore and India have expanded considerably. Our landmark Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) boosted economic relations. Singapore is now India's sixth largest trading partner, and second largest source of FDI into India. Conversely, Singapore is the top overseas investment destination for Indian companies, which now form the largest foreign corporate contingent in Singapore. I look forward to concluding the second review of the CECA early to further enhance our trade and investment links. Opportunities to increase mutual trade and investments will only grow as India continues to develop, thanks to the reforms you introduced 20 years ago, and spurred on by the creativity, enterprise and resilience of the large Indian population.

5 Our countries cooperate in a wide range of other areas too. For example, we support India's initiative to revive the ancient Nalanda University as a new centre of learning that will bring together Asia's brightest students to study religion, languages and history, as well as environment and information technology.

6 When we met today, Prime Minister Singh and I discussed new initiatives for collaboration. These include vocational skills co-operation and inter-parliamentary interactions which will broaden our wide-ranging exchanges even more. I am particularly pleased that we will be signing an MOU on Cooperation in the field of Personnel Management and Public Administration, and launching a new Executive Programme under our Cultural Agreement to promote exchanges in the arts, heritage and archives.

7 Later today, Prime Minister Singh will witness the unveiling of a Nehru marker, which results from the close collaboration between the Indian

High Commission and the Singapore National Heritage Board. The marker, located along the historic Singapore River, will be a tribute to Mr Jawarhalal Nehru who inspired a generation of Asian nationalists, including those in Singapore, to fight for freedom from colonial rule. The marker will also symbolise the enduring friendship between India and Singapore.

8 As India continues to grow, so will its influence and stature. Singapore looks forward to India playing a more active role in global affairs. We support India's permanent membership in an expanded UN Security Council. We believe that India has much to contribute to the stability and progress of Asia. India is an integral part of the regional architecture in Asia and is an important ASEAN dialogue partner. We look forward to celebrating 20 years of this partnership at the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in New Delhi in December 2012.

9 Prime Minister, the Singapore-India relationship is comprehensive, mutually beneficial and in excellent shape. I am confident that our partnership will continue to strengthen and grow in the years ahead.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

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10 May I now invite you to rise and join me in a toast to

- The good health and well-being of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Madam Gursharan Kaur
- The peace and prosperity of the people of India; and
- The enduring friendship between our two countries.

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