

**SPEECH BY MR LEE YOCK SUAN, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION,
AT THE NATIONAL DAY OBSERVANCE CEREMONY OF
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION ON TUE 8 AUG '95 AT 9.15 AM**

I am happy to be here with you to commemorate our 30th National Day.

2 As we celebrate our past achievements as a nation, we are thankful to be where we are today. Thirty years ago the future looked bleak for Singapore, a small island state with no natural resources, high unemployment and no defence capability. Singapore might not have made it to become an independent and thriving nation had it not been for the grit and determination of the people and the leaders to survive difficult times. The foundations for our society were laid by pioneers who had a vision for a place they could call home.

3 During the turbulent 50's and 60's, the fate of Singapore hung in the balance as the government struggled against the communists and communalists who threatened the security and well-being of Singapore. Had events turned out differently, there would be little to celebrate today. Once a society gets locked into a wrong system, it is extremely difficult to extricate itself. Witness the situation in countries which have emerged recently from 40 years of communism. Even advanced and benign societies in the West are locked in by the structural problems of a welfare state. And in extreme situations like in Africa and the former Yugoslavia, extreme ethnic and tribal hatred can tear a country apart.

4 Present-day Singaporeans are clearly the beneficiaries of the system and core values which have been set in place by our pioneers. An honest and effective government, a free-enterprise and export-oriented economy, meritocracy and social mobility, CPF and home ownership, a sound education system, a clean and green environment, an efficient transportation system - these are some of the pillars of a total system that has worked extremely well. Coupled with the energy and enterprise of a hardworking people, it has enabled Singapore to attain the income level and living standard of a developed country in just one generation.

5 The immediate concern of all of us here is of course our education system. It has seen tremendous change over the last 30 years. It has progressed quickly, from a system that sought to get as many children into schools for basic education to one that aims to maximise the potential of every child. Instead of several language streams, there is now a uniform stream with emphasis on English and the mother tongue. Streaming has enabled students to learn at their own pace and to reach higher levels of attainment within our schools and higher institutions of learning. The proportion of graduate teachers has increased significantly. New institutions have been created, such as junior colleges, new polytechnics and the ITE. Drab and uniform school facilities have been replaced by buildings with unique aesthetic identities and an environment that is academically and socially conducive. Schools have been given greater autonomy to manage their affairs and to introduce innovations to suit the needs of their students.

6 We must continue to innovate and improve to equip young Singaporeans with the knowledge and skills to compete successfully in the 21st century. The demands on the education system will grow more complex as we face the challenges of an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing world environment. We must harness new education technology and improve our teaching methods and curricula to teach our students how to learn independently and think creatively.

7 The greatest service we can provide to the nation is to deliver an excellent education to our young. This is our mission. At the same time we must also find ways to continually improve our service to the public. Our Ministry is fully committed to the objectives of PS21 in providing excellence in service.

8 In this respect, I am pleased that over this past year, our Ministry has made several improvements. The on-line registration of Primary 1 pupils is the first example to come to mind. We have also made information on the education system more accessible to the public through Internet. Now, parents can obtain at the touch of a button a listing of schools in Singapore and information on the structure of the education system. We have begun receiving feedback on educational policies on the MOE Home Page on Internet.

9 I take this opportunity to thank all those in the Ministry and the education service, both past and present, for your contributions to education in Singapore and your commitment to excellence in education. You have all played a role in nation-building.

10 This National Day is an apt occasion to reaffirm the values that we share as a nation, the values which have seen us through the past decades. Our values are Asian and communitarian ones. As Singaporeans, we place the nation and community interests before personal interests. We believe in the family as the basic building block of our society. We rely on family and community support to achieve our goals. We work together in consensus and not conflict and jealously guard our racial and religious harmony.

11 The future will remain bright if we continue to pass on this Singapore heritage to the generations that come after us. I wish all of you a happy and meaningful National Day.

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**SPEECH BY MR ABDULLAH TARMUGI,
ACTING MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,
AT THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
(MCD)'S 1995 NATIONAL DAY OBSERVANCE CEREMONY
AT MCD BUILDING, THOMSON ROAD
ON TUESDAY, 8 AUGUST 1995 AT 9.45 AM**

Today is a very significant day for all of us and for our nation as we mark the celebration of 30 years of Singapore's independence.

2 Much has changed in Singapore over the last thirty years. When Singapore first gained independence in 1965, it had an uncertain future.

3 Today, 30 years later, Singapore is in an enviable position. Modern sanitation is available for nearly 100 per cent of the population. In 1960, only nine per cent of the population lived in public housing. Today, 91.1 per cent of households own their HDB flats. The infant mortality rate in 1994 was 4.3 per thousand live births, as compared to 20.5 in 1970. Life expectancy for males and females in 1994 was 74.4 years and 78.5 years respectively, as compared to 65.1 and 70.0 in 1970. Singapore now enjoys the second highest standard of living in Asia after Japan.

4 These conditions have come about through a good Government instilling sound economic and social policies, working in close partnership and consensus with the people of Singapore.