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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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REMARKS BY PRIME MINISTER GOH CHOK TONG AT THE LUNCH HELD IN HONOUR OF THE
PRESIDENT ABDURRAHMAN WAHID OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA ON SATURDAY, 6 NOVEMBER
1999, AT THE ISTANA AT 11.35 AM

Your Excellency President Abdurrahman Wahid

Ibu Sinta Nuriyah

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I take great pleasure in extending a warm welcome to Your Excellency
President Abdurrahman Wahid, your wife Ibu Sinta Nuriyah, and members of your

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delegation to Singapore. The government and people of Singapore are deeply honoured by your visit. Your decision to visit the ASEAN countries early in your Presidency highlights the importance that Indonesia places on close ties with its neighbours.

2 Your election as President last month marked a new phase for Indonesia. As close

friends of Indonesia, we watched with deep interest and attention the political developments

in Indonesia over the past 18 months. The final outcomes have been widely welcomed, both

in Indonesia and beyond. Your government has started out very well, with the moral

authority and legitimacy to govern the country. You have begun the process of national

reconciliation and building national unity.

3 Your moderate views on the relationship between religion and the state are

recognised and applauded. Your fight against extremism and bigotry is well-known. You

advocate religious tolerance and racial harmony in consonance with Indonesia's motto,

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"Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" - unity within diversity. This spirit has served Indonesia well,

keeping the country intact and united. Your people now look to you to provide them with

the inspiration and leadership to reaffirm the Pancasila philosophy of tolerance and harmony.

They will find in your beliefs and outlook, like those of your father and grandfather before

you, a source of solace and hope.

Your Excellency

4 While some of the political and social issues have been resolved with your election

as President, there remain economic issues that your Government has already set out to

tackle. I am certain that under your wise leadership, Indonesia would be able to recover

completely from the challenges of the recent past.

Your Excellency

5 Our relations are excellent and have been built on good and sound foundations. Our

two countries have worked closely for the interests and mutual benefits of our peoples. Our

shared perspectives have helped us to maintain our close relationship through the recent

regional crisis. Even through the most difficult of times, Singapore did not lose confidence

in Indonesia. The West Natuna Gas Project and the recent Pertamina-Singapore Power

agreement for the supply of natural gas to Singapore from South Sumatra reflect Singapore'

s faith and long term confidence in Indonesia. After meeting you this morning, I am

confident that we will continue to deepen and broaden our bilateral relationship.

6 Indonesia is one of our closest neighbours and a major trading partner. Singapore

would like to see a prosperous and stable Indonesia. Singapore will work with Indonesia to

assist in its economic recovery. Our best contribution is that of a catalyst to help restore

investor confidence in Indonesia through practical measures.

7 The Riau Cooperation projects have become symbols of the close bilateral

cooperation between Singapore and Indonesia. The Riau Cooperation projects withstood

the crisis that had hit the region. The potential of the projects has not yet been fully realised.

If Indonesia finds it useful, we can explore how the Riau Cooperation Projects can be

further expanded to bring in more foreign investments into the Rias and create more job

opportunities for the Indonesian people.

Your Excellency

8 Both Indonesia and Singapore, as founding members of ASEAN, must work

together to strengthen and prepare ASEAN for the next phase of its development. Let us

consolidate ASEAN and foster even closer cooperation among the ASEAN member states.

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We should inject a new vigour into ASEAN.

Your Excellencies

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

9 May I now ask you to join me in a toast to closer relations between the Republic of

Indonesia and Singapore and the good health and success of President Abdurrahman

Wahid.

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