

otc19990525f

ISTANA PRESS RELEASE

=====

EMBARGO INSTRUCTIONS

The attached press release/speech is EMBARGOED till delivery.

Please check against delivery.

For assistance call 3757795

=====

SPRINTER 3.0, Singapore's Press Releases on the Internet) is located at:

<http://www.gov.sg/sprinter/>

=====

EMBARGOED TILL AFTER DELIVERY

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

SPEECH BY PRESIDENT ONG TENG CHEONG AT THE
OPENING OF THE "EVEREST: SINGAPORE AT THE SUMMIT"
EXHIBITION ON TUESDAY, 25 MAY 99 AT 6.45 PM
AT THE SINGAPORE HISTORY MUSEUM

Minister for Information and the Arts

Chairman, National Heritage Board

Members of the Mt Everest Expedition

Excels

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It was once said that "some people make headlines while others make history". I would say that the Mt Everest Expedition did both. Today, we commemorate the summiting of Mt Everest by a Singapore expedition exactly a year ago with the opening of this exhibition. I remember with pride my association with the Mt Everest Team.

During the early days, the Team had considerable difficulties raising funds.

otc19990525f

Surprisingly, few Singaporean firms were prepared to sponsor them. Even the press and some journalists were discouraging them. Somehow, Singaporeans did not feel it mattered or that sponsoring a few young people to pursue their dreams was noble.

Some focused only on the risks that these young people were taking. The usual question asked was "what if they failed?" Many Singaporeans are still afraid of failures. This mindset has to be changed.

After the initial jubilation when the expedition team summited, questions were raised about their nationalities. It took some shine off their success but it was an educational experience for Singapore as a whole.

We learnt the meaning of loyalty and the need for foreign talent and tolerance, especially in an immigrant society like ours.

Many minds have been broadened and opened in the process. We now know that even something that appears foreign and unattainable can be achieved if we are determined, perseverant and dare take the risks.

We realise that aspirations need not always be in materialistic terms. There are other pursuits, other paths less traveled that deserve as much support and as much pride when those taking them succeed. This will be a test of our maturity.

The Team has recorded their trails and tribulations, the setbacks and final success in a book called "To the Vertical End of the Earth". I recommend it to you.

Let me end with a quote from Helen Keller.

"Life" she said, "is either a daring adventure or nothing. Security does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than exposure." (unquote) Taking risks is not alien to Singaporeans. We took many risks when we left Malaysia and forged out on our own. I hope that Singapore's past success has not dulled us into risk avoidance. We will be the lesser for this. I am proud to say the Team met all the challenges with toughness and resoluteness.

I am pleased to declare the exhibition open.

National Archives of Singapore