

Singapore Government
MEDIA RELEASE

Swearing In Speech

Let's Shape Our Future Together

齐心共创美好未来
**Marilah Kita Sama-sama
Mencorakkan Masa Depan Kita**

Mr President,

Friends and Colleagues,

and my fellow Singaporeans,

1 I am deeply honoured to be sworn in as the Prime Minister of Singapore. I am grateful for your support, and will do my utmost to serve you and Singapore. Let me begin with a few words in Malay and in Chinese.

[Malay speech]

Saudara-saudara setanah air

2 Majlis malam ini adalah milik seluruh rakyat Singapura. Menerusi kerja keras dan iltizam, kita telah sama-sama membina sebuah negara yang bersatu padu dan maju berasaskan lunas-lunas meritokrasi, keadilan sosial dan keihsanan. Kita telah berusaha gigih dan berjaya mencapai impian bersama kita iaitu masa depan yang lebih baik bagi semua rakyat Singapura. Semua kaum di negara ini telah meningkat maju. Kita juga membantu golongan yang memerlukan.

3 Amanah yang pernah diserahkan kepada Encik Lee Kuan Yew dan Encik Goh Chok Tong, kini berada di pundak saya. Saya menerima penghormatan ini dengan segala rendah hati. Saya akan berusaha sedaya upaya untuk memenuhi tanggungjawab. Oleh itu, saya mengajak anda untuk bekerja bersama saya bagi membentuk sebuah negara Singapura yang memberi perhatian terhadap setiap rakyatnya,

menyediakan pendidikan yang terbaik untuk anak-anak kita, dan memberi peluang yang pukal kepada semua orang untuk mencapai cita-cita mereka.

4 Masa depan kita penuh dengan pelbagai cabaran dan peluang. Kita akan sama-sama menempuh susah senang sehingga kita berjaya sebagai sebuah negara. Sebagai Perdana Menteri anda, saya akan bekerja keras dan mencari jalan yang terbaik bagi seluruh rakyat Singapura. Marilah kita mengatur langkah bersama, bahu membahu demi membentuk masa depan yang lebih cemerlang.

(English translation of Malay speech)

2 Tonight's occasion belongs to all Singaporeans. Through our hard work and dedication we have together built a cohesive and progressive nation that is founded on principles of meritocracy, social justice and compassion. We worked hard to achieve our shared dream of a better future for all Singaporeans. All of our communities have progressed. We have helped those who needed help.

3 The trust that you have placed in Mr Lee Kuan Yew and Mr Goh Chok Tong who have both discharged their responsibilities admirably, is now given to me. I am humbled by this honour. I will do my best to rise to the challenge. And so I ask you to work with me to build a Singapore that will care for all our citizens, educate all our children well, and give everybody full opportunities to fulfill their aspirations.

4 The future holds many challenges and opportunities. We will take the good and the bad together and we will succeed as a nation. As your Prime Minister I will work hard to achieve what is best for all Singaporeans. Let us shape our future together.

[Mandarin speech]

[华语]

National Archives of Singapore

各位同胞：

5 1984年，吴作栋先生邀请我参加大选。当时，我还在武装部队里服务，是一名正规军人，也是个单亲家长，正忙着照顾两名年幼的孩子，没有参加政治的打算。但是，吴先生说服了我。他这二十年来给予我很大的支持与鼓励，我对此感激不尽。

6 今晚，我接替吴先生出任总理，感到十分荣幸。这是一项任重道远的职责。我们的社会一直在改变。今天的新加坡，与1990年吴先生出任总理时的新加坡不同。我将尽我的能力，实现新一代新加坡人的理想。我们也必须照顾老一辈的新加坡人。新加坡能有今天的成就，他们的功劳不小。

7 我希望能跟大家齐心协力，在李光耀先生和吴作栋先生奠定的基础上，建设我国的经济，制造更多的就业机会。让我们在这片土地上建立温馨的家園，齐心共创美好未来，让社会的每一个成员，都对新加坡有归属感，都能过着充实和有意义的生活。

(English translation of Mandarin speech)

5 When Mr Goh Chok Tong asked me to stand for elections in 1984, I was reluctant. I was then in the army, serving as a regular. I was a single parent, with two young children. Entering politics was not in my mind. But Mr Goh persuaded me. He has guided me since as a mentor and a friend, for which I am personally grateful.

6 Tonight, I take over as Prime Minister from Mr Goh. I feel deeply honoured to take on this challenging responsibility. Today's Singapore is different from the one which Mr Goh took over in 1990 when he became Prime Minister. I will strive to fulfil the aspirations of our new generation. At the same time, we will take care of older Singaporeans who helped to build today's Singapore.

7 Let us continue to build on the foundations laid by Mr Lee Kuan Yew and Mr Goh Chok Tong. Let us grow our economy, and create more good jobs for our people. Let us make Singapore our best home. Let us shape our future together, so that we all feel a sense of belonging, and we can all live fulfilling lives in a good home in Singapore.

[English speech]

Friends and Fellow Singaporeans

Entering Politics

8 When Mr Goh Chok Tong persuaded me to enter politics in 1984, it was a big change from the army. I had gone to university on government scholarships, and benefited from the Singapore system. As a boy, I had watched Singapore become independent. Then, as a young man I saw it

grow against tremendous odds, and strengthen year by year. Those were my formative years, and it left a deep impression on me.

9 I wanted to contribute to the Singapore story. Entering politics was a way to do this, and to repay the obligation which I felt. Since then, I have served in the government with Mr Goh for 20 years.

Tribute to Mr Goh Chok Tong

10 I am indebted to Mr Goh for his guidance and support through these years as colleague, friend and mentor. As Prime Minister, Mr Goh has fulfilled his promise to keep Singapore thriving and growing. But he has done much more. He built a strong team, involved Singaporeans in the issues which affected all of us, and brought us all closer together.

11 Today's Singapore is quite different from the country that Mr Goh took over in 1990. It still bears the imprint of Lee Kuan Yew and the founder generation, but it has grown and matured with Mr Goh's softer touch. Today's Singapore is more vibrant and open, more resilient and cohesive. It is in sync with the times, and ready for tomorrow's challenges. In his own quiet way, Mr Goh has transformed Singapore.

12 Tonight, on behalf of all Singaporeans, I thank Mr Goh Chok Tong for his sterling and selfless service to the nation, and for his lasting contributions to Singapore as Prime Minister.

The Fabric of Our Nation

13 I am deeply conscious of my responsibility as Prime Minister. I thank my Cabinet colleagues for choosing me, my fellow Members of Parliament for having confidence in me, and my fellow Singaporeans for supporting me and my team. I will strive to be a Prime Minister for all Singaporeans.

14 I am glad Singaporeans from many backgrounds are here to join me for tonight's ceremony – community leaders and national servicemen, teachers and nurses, hawkers and taxi-drivers, business leaders and artists, and many others.

15 I would also like to acknowledge the many more Singaporeans who are watching this ceremony over television, and especially the residents of Ang Mo Kio GRC and Teck Ghee, who have supported me loyally for these twenty years. Tonight's occasion belongs to all Singaporeans.

16 Together, you represent the diversity and richness of our nation. You symbolise our commitment to join our hands together to weave the different multi-coloured threads of our lives into the Singapore tapestry – the fabric of our nation.

17 We are one nation together, building a future for ourselves and our people. As we prosper, all communities will progress and no one will be left behind. We will look after the less educated and the elderly who have helped build Singapore. And we must also have a place in our hearts and our lives for the disabled, who are our brothers and sisters too.

A New Generation

18 This political transition is not just a change of Prime Ministers, or of a Cabinet. It is a generational change for Singapore, a shift to the post-independence generation in a post-Cold War world.

19 The majority of Singaporeans today were born after 1965, after independence. They grew up in a different Singapore compared to their parents. My Government will stay in tune with their needs and aspirations. We must tap the energy and minds of our people, and involve them in the choices which affect their lives. That way, every citizen can have a hand, in big ways and small, in shaping our common future.

20 The next generation of leaders must come from our post-independence generation. Mr Goh Chok Tong was scouting for talent long before he became Prime Minister in 1990. This was how I entered politics in 1984, in my early 30s, together with four ministers¹ now in my Cabinet, plus the Speaker. This process of renewal has continued with each successive general election.

21 Hence, leadership succession will be one of my top priorities. We must continue to search for younger Singaporeans in their early 30s and 40s to rejuvenate the team, to inject new perspectives and to prepare for leadership succession at all levels – ministers, MPs, at the grassroots, in the trade unions.

22 Therefore do not wait to be invited to tea, but step forward to make a difference to yourselves, to your fellow citizens, and to Singapore. Let us shape our future together.

An Open and Inclusive Singapore

23 We may be a small island but we are a global city linked to the whole world, offering exciting opportunities and experiences. We are an open, multiracial and cosmopolitan society. We enjoy a good reputation in the world. Because we have come far, we can now set higher goals for ourselves, and fly higher.

¹ Dr Lee Boon Yang, Mr Mah Bow Tan, Mr Wong Kan Seng and Mr Yeo Cheow Tong.

24 We want to build a vibrant and competitive economy. That is the way to create good jobs, and improve the lives of all our citizens. Without the resources that come from growth, we cannot achieve much. But prosperity is not our only goal, nor is economic growth an end in itself.

25 We all want to educate our children well. As we prosper, we can afford to invest more in our young, and we will do so. We want our young to think independently, to explore with confidence, and to pursue their passions. We must nurture them into stout-hearted, upright adults. Education is not just about training for jobs. It is about opening doors for our children, and giving them hope and opportunities. It is more than filling a vessel with knowledge – it is to light a fire in our young people. They are our future.

26 We will continue to expand the space which Singaporeans have to live, to laugh, to grow and to be ourselves. Our people should feel free to express diverse views, pursue unconventional ideas, or simply be different. We should have the confidence to engage in robust debate, so as understand our problems, conceive fresh solutions, and open up new spaces. We should recognise many paths of success, and many ways to be Singaporean. We must give people a second chance, for those who have tasted failure may be the wiser and stronger ones among us. Ours must be an open and inclusive Singapore.

27 Even as we pursue individual ambitions, we must also deepen our sense of common purpose and identity. We can stand tall only if we stand together. Our years in school and national service, our shared joys and sorrows, our attachment to familiar places, our bonds with family and friends – all these reinforce our sense of being one Singapore family. Already, a Singaporean is readily recognisable anywhere in the world. We must continue to widen our common ground, and care for one another. Our unity gives us the resilience to weather every storm and thrive as an independent nation.

Adapting to a Changing World

28 Our future is full of promise, but we must be prepared for the unexpected. In a globalised world, we must re-think our assumptions, take bold and fresh approaches and adapt nimbly to changing conditions.

29 We depend on a stable and peaceful Asia, and will have to stay alert for signs of danger in the region or the world. A mishap in cross-straits relations can derail growth throughout Asia. The war on terrorism can strain our racial and religious harmony. We must help our less educated, older workers to learn new skills so that they can stay employed and look after their families. And we must deal with complex and sensitive issues

such as the ageing population, immigration, and encouraging more Singaporeans to get married and have more babies.

30 We will overcome each new challenge, as we have always done – by recognising it, by putting our minds together to find imaginative solutions, and by tackling the problems resolutely as one people. Only then can we rise above our problems, and bring our people and our country to a higher level.

Writing the Next Chapter

31 Our prospects are brighter than ever before. Our economy is growing strongly again. We are well-positioned at the centre of a continent which is on the move. There are plenty of opportunities for all of us if we make the effort, take calculated risks and stay united. Singaporean companies and businessmen are all over Southeast Asia, China, India, and increasingly in the Middle East and further afield. As a nation, we are stronger, more cohesive, and have more resources than ever before. The future is ours to make.

32 Let us strive to keep Singapore a haven in an uncertain world, open to all for business, safe for citizens and friends, a welcoming home that gladdens our hearts every time we return from our travels.

33 Let us build a nation where every citizen has a place, where all can live in dignity and harmony, and where we all have the opportunity to raise our children and realise our dreams.

34 Let us be a dynamic city that is open and inclusive, a meritocratic society that is compassionate and caring, and a confident people with clear minds and warm hearts.

35 Join me to write this next chapter of the Singapore story. Work with me to make Singapore a home we love, a community we belong to, and a country we are proud to call our own.
