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SPEECH BY BRIG-GEN (RES) LEE HSIEN LOONG, ACTING MINISTER (TRADE AND INDUSTRY), AT THE SINGAPORE LEE CLAN GENERAL ASSOCIATION'S 80TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER AT NEPTUNE THEATRE RESTAURANT ON SUNDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 1986 AT 7.30 PM

I am honoured to be invited to the 80th Anniversary Dinner of the Singapore Lee Clan General Association. This is an auspicious occasion. Many of you gathered here are busy professionals and businessmen, who despite your many other commitments, are actively involved in the work of the Association. I am sure our forefathers who founded this Association would be proud of its achievements in the last 80 years.

The Lee Clan Association has a long and interesting history. It began as a humble organisation, whose mission was to mobilise mutual support to help fellow members tide over hard times. In the early days of Singapore, when the immigrants were just beginning to establish roots here, there was an urgent need to promote kinship among the clan members so as to strengthen their unity and esprit de corps. New immigrants who had just arrived in Singapore, with no kith or kin to look after them, faced many difficulties. There was no proper government administration to turn to for assistance. Naturally, they had to turn to fellow immigrants and predecessors for mutual help. Such was the pioneering spirit of the early Chinese immigrants, who toiled hard to overcome all obstacles. In doing so, they created a better life for themselves and their descendents.

Economic and social conditions today are dramatically different. There are no more 'sinkeh' (). The population is rooted and well established. They do not need help to learn about Singapore; they grew up here. Many of the clan members have been successful in their careers. The government administers efficiently to the needs of the people, sometimes even too efficiently. It has provided many public services and community assistance programmes, such as bursaries, scholarships and subsidised housing. The traditional functions of the Association are no longer as relevant today.

I am happy to note that the Lee Clan Association is re-orienting its direction to fit the changing circumstances. It has also organised activities in the areas of education, social welfare and culture. It has rendered useful assistance to the community at large. These are praiseworthy efforts.

I believe the Association can further expand its scope. Firstly, there is a need to induct more members into the Association, especially the younger ones. This is a necessary self-renewal process. Secondly, the Association can forge closer links with the other grassroot organisations. This will generate more activities of interest to its members. Recently, the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations highlighted the need to preserve and promote Chinese culture and traditional values. Here the Association could play an important role, by supporting cultural activities, performances and Chinese publications. In addition, the Association should continue with its assistance to the community in general. This will give its members opportunities to be actively involved in community service.

I am confident the Lee Clan Association will take up the challenge to serve its members and the community as a whole, and develop new roles for itself to keep up with changing times.

I extend my best wishes to the Association on its 80th Anniversary.

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