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SPEECH BY DR TAY ENG SOON, MINISTER OF STATE (EDUCATION),
AT THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER OF THE TONG SAN ASSOCIATION
AT THE SINGAPORE CHINESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
MAIN HALL ON SUNDAY, 24 APRIL 1988 AT 7.30 PM

I am very happy to be present at tonight's dinner. Tonight is a special occasion for Tong San Huay Kuan. The Association is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

On such an auspicious occasion, it is natural for us to look back to the past as well as look ahead to the future. Fifty years is a long period. In the history of Singapore, the past 50 years have been the most eventful and historic. During these 50 years, we changed from being a colony to an independent nation. We changed from being a poor, backward country to becoming a prosperous, progressive nation. We have come a long way.

What has made this possible? Luck? To some extent as international conditions favoured us. But the same conditions favoured many other developing countries. And they have not done well.

Therefore, there must be deeper reasons why we have succeeded. The most important reason in my opinion is good government, a government consisting of able, honest and dedicated leaders. This is what makes the crucial difference, not luck, not natural resources, not even money. This is the number one lesson we should all learn from our past 50 years.

What about the next 50 years? There will be great uncertainties. Who can tell how international relations and the world economy will twist and turn? Yet we must face them and learn to survive in all the uncertainty. Is there any formula that can help us do so? The past 50 difficult years have provided the answer. In a word, we continue to need good government - good, able, honest leaders to lead our nation.

The question is whether Singapore will continue to enjoy good government in the future. This will depend on two key factors:

- (a) Able, honest and dedicated people will come forward to become Members of Parliament. It cannot be assumed that this will happen automatically. We all know that at each election there are opportunists, even those with a crooked record who try to get into Parliament.
- (b) Our people will vote carefully and wisely. Again from past experience, there is always a risk that some will vote recklessly and by default the wrong type of persons will get into Parliament.

It won't be long before we have our general elections. The elections will reveal how mature and wise our people have become.

My best wishes to Tong San Huay Kuan for its future.

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