

Singapore Government

MEDIA RELEASE

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Speech of Mr Zainul Abidin Rasheed, Senior Parliamentary Secretary (Foreign Affairs) and MP for Cheng San GRC, at the Punggol East Division National Day Dinner, at 8pm, Saturday, August 12, 2000 at Punggol Park.

Mr Lee Yock Suan, Minister for Information and the Arts and Minister for the Environment and MP for Cheng San GRC, my other MP colleagues, Mr Heng Chiang Meng, Dr Michael Lim, Mr Yeo Guat Kwang, former MP for Punggol, Mr Ng Kah Ting, Punggol East CCC Patrons, Mr Alloysius Lim and Hj Jaleel, Mr Eric Low, PBM, Advisor to Hougang Constituency GROs, CCC Chairman LTC (RES) Sunny Leow BBM, CCMC Chairman Leslie Yong BBM, Chairman of this year's ND Dinner Organising Committee, Mr Steven Kee, Grassroots leaders of Punggol East, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, a very good evening and Thank you for gracing this National Day Dinner. Happy National Day.

35 years of independence mean a lot to us. But we are still young as a nation, and in terms of nation building.

We have had our fair share of ups and downs. Two recessions in 1985 and recently over the last few years have shown us, and to the world, what we as a nation and as a people could do.

We have done well. From the backwaters of the swamps of Jurong and Punggol, for example, to the gleaming Suntec City, Shenton Way and world class Orchard Road, we have emerged as one of the model states in the world. We are proud of our achievements.

Whether the business/finance or communication hubs, or the satellite towns built all over the island, we have a lot of hardware to our credit. But with globalisation and growing competition world-wide, we have no choice but to continue to be on guard for change. Old success stories and old skills are no longer sufficient.

As we face the challenges of the knowledge-based economy and life sciences, we have to ensure that our people are fully geared for change. Skilling and reskilling will be a norm for all of us. Let it not just be a slogan or worse a rhetoric but a reality. Take bold steps to be in line with the needs of today for our and our children's tomorrow.

As we continue to build on our hardware and our skills, let us also remind ourselves of the importance of heartware. We will have to continue to work hard to make multi-racial Singapore a better place to live in, in harmony.

When I was at the Padang last Thursday, I felt proud and reassured looking at our military hardware. More impressive and heartfelt was our collective spirit to Stand Up for Singapore. That will be the ultimate test for all us: Not just our commitment to help build on the successes in amassing the hardware but to truly feel and to be ready to fight for Singapore's survival and ready to die for Singapore. Let the Singapore heartbeat sink in deep in our minds and in our hearts.

Happy National Day. Thank you.

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