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**TRANSCRIPT OF PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEN
LOONG'S NATIONAL DAY RALLY ENGLISH SPEECH
ON SUNDAY, 20 AUGUST 2006 AT UNIVERSITY
CULTURAL CENTRE**

Friends and fellow Singaporeans, my focus tonight is on Singapore's future in a rapidly changing world. The world is changing faster than ever. Singapore's changing rapidly too and we have to adapt. We have to adapt both as individuals and also as a society and a nation to what's happening around us. Tonight, I will cover five key issues which are crucial to our long-term growth and prosperity. First, the economy which is a precondition for everything we want to do. Secondly, the region, what's happening around us which has a powerful effect on our lives. Then three issues for Singapore. One, our population, two the digital age and how it's changing us, and three heartware, the key to keeping us Singaporean.

I met one grassroots leader last week. He asked me, "What goodies will you be announcing?" I had to tell him that I would be talking about subjects which are going to be very important for us for the long term but are subjects which have no quick final solutions and therefore, not suitable for goodies. But we have to discuss them, we have to understand them, we have to share views on them because they will have major implications for our society and how we respond as a nation will determine our future.

The Economy

Let me start off talking about the economy. We have done well these last couple of years and particularly this year and I'm confident that the economy is going to grow. It's not just the numbers but it's also the quality of the growth and what the growth shows of what we are able to do and what people think of us. We have set as a target for our growth for the long term, we set three to five per cent growth. But in the last two or three years, we have done better than that. We had 10, then we had 7-plus, this year first half we've had 9, for the year we expect 7. I think that when the conditions are good and the sun is shining, we should go for it, as fast as we can as much as we can. Get the growth put it under our belt, put it aside a little bit, so when the thunderstorm comes again, we will be ready. But let me tell you why the growth these last few years shows that we have what it takes to succeed.

You look at the projects which have come in. You look at what we have been able to draw in, the IR, the Integrated Resort at Marina South, five billion dollars of a project, a very major commitment by the investor, a vote of confidence in Singapore. We were not sure that when we launched the IR tender, we would get such an overwhelming response but we got good bids. We have awarded a good project and now we are calling another bid for a second IR in Sentosa and we have got four investors who are interested and I think we are going to have a second good integrated resort in Singapore.

In manufacturing, we are competitive. Again we have got big and very important projects. Shell has a multibillion dollar petrochemical project here on Pulau Bukom, also on Jurong Island, spread in two places. Exxon Mobil is planning a very major project here, past several important milestones although they haven't made a final decision

yet. In electronics, we are getting wafer fabs to come to Singapore. We have had two big projects recently. One was French, the other one is a Korean and German joint venture. Why are they here? It's not because we have low wages, it's not because we are competing at the bottom. It's because we are the best place for high quality investments, clean, safe, predictable. Clean environment, working systems and confidence – confidence that Singaporeans have what it takes to adapt to a changing world and are willing to change. Confidence that the government knows what it's doing and can get people to go with it. Confidence that the whole system works and if you plunk your investment here, few billion dollars, it will be safe, it will be profitable and people will work and there will be results. Therefore, more projects will come and therefore, more jobs and more growth will be created.

We are not just sitting here, waiting for projects to come. We are developing our capabilities and one of the capabilities we are working on is R &D, Research and Development. We are starting with three R&D areas. One, biomedical, two, water technology and three, **interactive and digital media**. They are just words but let me tell you why we went into these three areas so that you get some image of it. Biotechnology, biomedicine because we've already got a base, we have done a lot of work, we have got scientists here, we have got a reputation and we are beginning to see results. We are going to put more investments into biomedicine so that we will be able to do clinical research. In other words, take projects from the lab to the bedside in the hospital, so that we experiment to discover how we can treat patients best, which treatments work, what is the best procedure, how we can not only get the R&D results but also improve medical services and medical care in Singapore.

Water, I don't have to tell you why it is important to Singapore but it is an area where we have an advantage. Our companies are among the leading players. We have got Keppel, we have got Sembawang, we have got Hyflux. So I think it's an area where we should put some money and stay ahead because for a country like Singapore to be able to export water technology to the Middle East or to China, I think that is something remarkable and which we can do. **Interactive and digital media, what does that mean? It means computer games, it means making movies, animation, cartoons. Very competitive business but one where maybe we have a chance and we can't afford not to be there. I think we have a chance to be there. I give you one example, Japanese Anime, I don't know how many of you watch Japanese cartoons, but these are the Japanese style cartoons, animation.** One big Japanese company has gone into joint venture with NTU (Nanyang Technological University) to produce anime. Why did they do that? We don't speak Japanese, we are not so many cartoon fans in Singapore. But NTU has developed computer technology so that they can produce anime cartoons 40 per cent cheaper than other people. We have gone into anime and there will be other activities, other games, other technologies where we can develop and maintain a position.

We are developing our external wing. Our companies are going abroad and doing well. You read about the big companies in the newspapers but tonight let me tell you about one small company. Tharman came across it and mentioned it to me. He was in Shenyang recently and he came across a Singaporean who was selling curry puffs in Shenyang. He talked to the young man, turns out that the father is in Ang Mo Kio Central, used to be my constituency. Tip Top curry puffs. Father is successful here, the son went to China to venture. He looked around Shenyang, he concluded that the food was not so

interesting and varied as if you go to Shanghai or to Guangzhou, so there's an opportunity to sell something which they have never met, Singapore curry puffs. Very successful, I think he has got five shops in Shenyang and now he is going to go further north, Harbin, also sell curry puffs. The next time you go the Harbin Ice Festival – cold sculptures but hot curry puffs.

We are creating a wide variety of jobs in Singapore for all Singaporeans. Tourism with the IR as I told you just now, 30,000 jobs we think, that not counting the Sentosa IR. Manufacturing, good jobs, not just for graduates but technicians, diploma holders, semi-skilled workers all along the line. We are trying to get more people to do the manufacturing jobs, more Singaporeans to get into it. We are still trying but we hope Singaporeans will make the effort. We are going into aerospace maintenance, MRO, maintenance, repair and overhaul because people are flying jets all over the region and if you want your jet repaired, you want to make sure you have confidence in the place which is repairing it and the people who are repairing it and Singapore is the place. We are building a big aerospace park in Seletar and there will be opportunities for engineers, inspectors, technicians, whole range of people and you don't have to be in the field. You can convert and go into the field, learn the skills. There was one young man, Mr Goh Zeng Liang, he is only 35 years old. He used to be a car mechanic. He upgraded himself, joined SIA engineering, now he is an aerospace technician. From repairing your car to becoming an aerospace technician and he enjoys his present job because it means precision and attention to detail. And as he said "With cars, I didn't have to be so precise, with aeroplanes, I must get it exactly right!" So that's the sort of person I want in the industry.

We also want older and lower skilled workers to have jobs. We are creating jobs generally in the economy across the board but specifically, I think we have to pay attention to older lower-skilled workers, get them employed. I'm very encouraged because with a growing economy, companies are hiring and maybe they have no choice, maybe they are getting the message but they are hiring more older workers. If you look at the employment rates, the percentage of older people working, the men, aged 55 and above, say 55 to 64 years old, the group who are most vulnerable and at risk of being retired early, their employment rates have gone up dramatically this year. A lot more of them are at work again which is good but we must not slacken because as Swee Say reminds me, we have gone through this cycle several times. Each time there is a down cycle, people take training upgrading very seriously, then the economy recovers, then they slacken off, they find jobs, then down cycle, they are scrambling again. I think that this time, there is an up cycle, let's concentrate on the older workers, let's get them retrained because I fear when the next down cycle comes, it's going to hit them harder and we are going to need all the lead time we have in order to be ready for it and be able to protect the older workers in the next recession.

The Region

So our economy is doing well. But of course our economy depends on the region and on external factors. We don't prosper by ourselves. We prosper in Asia. If we were Singapore in Africa, however hardworking we are, I don't think we would be sitting like this, pretty. But we are Singapore in Asia and around us if we look at the world, the outlook is good. In Asia, China and India are doing well, Japan is also not doing badly. The energy is there, the drive is there. Southeast Asia is also carried along and so we are benefiting but there are some major risks in

the world. And when you are looking forward you can never say this is the way things will go. All you can say is here are some possibilities and here are some things which can go wrong. And there are a lot of things which can go bump in the night and go wrong. But tonight I just want to share with you two of our worries.

One is oil prices because of the Middle East. You have been reading the news, you know about Iran and the nuclear programme, their nuclear programme. You know about Iraq and the civil war which is going on there. You know about Israel and the war they have fought with Hizbollah which has altered perceptions of the Israeli defence forces in the Middle East and is going to have long term consequences. The problems are far from over. It's because of the uncertainties in the Middle East, that is why today oil is US\$70 plus a barrel and in Singapore electricity is expensive and bus fares have to go up. It's not that there's not enough oil. It's the fear, the uncertainty, the risk that's keeping the oil prices high and hurting us. But if something goes wrong in the Middle East and there is a flare up, oil prices will not stay at US\$70. They may go to US\$120, they may double to US\$150. I think it will have a very big impact on us. It will have a big impact on the whole world, create a global recession. We have to be psychologically prepared for that. The lower income groups we can help them. We have Utilities Save, we have various schemes, many schemes to help the lower income. We have been doing it, it has been helpful. As the oil prices stay high or if they get higher, we will do more as we will consider doing more next year in the budget. But the economy as a whole, if this happens and there's an oil crisis, an oil shock, then we will have to work together and pull through as we pulled through after the Asian crisis, as we pulled through after 911. Working together, cutting costs, showing that

we are different and taking the adjustments which we have to make in order to make ourselves competitive again.

The second worry which we have is terrorism. It's not a new problem but it's a problem which is far from over and what has happened in the UK these last couple of weeks, last week and you've been reading how they arrested a group about to blow up nine aeroplanes crossing the Atlantic, shows that it's a very serious risk. These were not people from the Middle East or directly Al-Qaeda operatives. These were British-born, second-generation immigrants in Britain who got organized and were linked up with Al-Qaeda and were going to do mass murder on an unimaginable scale, home-grown terrorists. Is it a far away thing? No. It's a danger to us too. It's a danger to us physically. This evening when you come here, it's like going into a battlefield. So many obstacles and scans but the greater danger is not the physical one. It's a danger to our racial harmony and our social cohesion, that something like this happening here or even not here but nearby can pull our racial harmony apart and destroy us. That's why we have to continue to take it very seriously, to continue to emphasize racial harmony, continue to focus on the community engagement programme and to work with the community leaders and all the IRCCs, the Inter Racial Confidence Circles and to share with you our worries and what we know so you can help us to deal with the problem and to keep the problem manageable if it should happen.

These are things which can go wrong. If you look around us in ASEAN, while overall things are good, we also see problems which already are in front of us. Some ASEAN countries are doing very well like Vietnam which is taking off but others have real difficulties. Thailand, for example, has had some tough time for the last almost a year. They are going into general elections for the second time this

year. In fact third time in two years in October and even the general election may not be the end of their political problems because the opposition to Prime Minister Thaksin and his Thai Rak Thai Party is very strong despite their getting two-thirds of the vote. In Malaysia, there are deep political differences between former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir and the present Prime Minister, Datuk Abdullah Badawi. I think everyone hopes that the problems will be resolved soon. They are not our problems. Bilaterally between Singapore and Malaysia, the negotiations over the bridge, over airspace and sand have ended. There are some other matters which are still outstanding but these are on the back burner for the time being and meanwhile, we are working together with Malaysia, fostering our cooperation in areas where we can have mutual benefit.

Indonesia also has significant difficulties. The government has tackled some very tough problems. Last year, they cut subsidies on petrol, on diesel, on kerosene, electricity, raised prices significantly, a very courageous move which was essential to them. But they have other things which they need to do. They have got labour laws which need to be changed, they have got tax laws which need to be changed. They have got investment laws which need to be changed but politically very difficult. They have to go through the DPR, the Parliament. It's a long process and investors are waiting to see when it is going to happen. We are working with Indonesia to cooperate with them to work on Special Economic Zones in the Riaus, Batam, Bintan and Karimun, so that what it is more difficult to do in Indonesia across the board, they can do first in their special economic zones, get it going, demonstrate and then you will be able, it works, there is basis to extend it to the rest of Indonesia. We are cooperating with Indonesia because we believe it's good for us if Indonesia prospers, it's good for ASEAN if Indonesia prospers.

These regional problems don't affect us directly but indirectly they affect us because they condition the climate of ASEAN as a whole and when investors look at ASEAN, and they see the clouds as well as the bright spots, they have one general impression and Singapore is part of that. ASEAN has to get its act together. We talk about ASEAN being the body with two wings, China, India taking off and carrying us along. But if your body is not strong, and the two wings are very strong, whether you are a bird or an aeroplane, you will have a problem. So, it's necessary for ASEAN to be strong in order to benefit from China and India. Otherwise they fly off, we are left in pieces on the ground and that's why we will continue work with our ASEAN partners to promote growth and stability in Southeast Asia. But if you take the situation as a whole, and make a considered assessment, I would say it's good. We just have to be ready psychologically and be prepared in case one of the things goes wrong, we will not be taken by surprise.

One important plus factor for us with this external world is our reputation, our high international standing. If you want to be special, if you want people to notice you, if we want Singapore to stand out, then our reputation is critical. And our reputation is good, which is one reason why we are getting our investments and growth. Next month, our reputation is on the line. S2006, the IMF and World Bank are having their annual meetings in Singapore. There' will be 16,000 delegates and visitors here. It's bigger than anything we have done. Let's work together to make it the best meeting they have had and let's do it all of us. We said four million smiles but it's actually also four million pairs of hands and hard work. It's not just smiles to welcome guests but it's also service from the heart, not just being nice to them but knowing what to do and knowing your job and being able to take care of them and

leave them with a clear impression that this is a special place and that what they can do in Singapore they can't do in many other places in the world. If you impress them, if Singaporeans impress them, that means the taxi drivers, the immigration officials, the counter-staff, the shop girls, the officials organizing the meetings, the liaison officers bringing the people from place to place, getting them to the right place at the right time, you will do a greater favour to Singapore and be more effective than any EDB or Tourism Board advertising campaign. Because this will be the real thing and not just a glossy picture. And what is impressing people is not what the ministers or the high officials do, but what ordinary Singaporeans are able to do, so that if they go back they can tell their people in Singapore, everybody is special. I think that is the impression we want to leave them and that is the impression we should leave tourists and visitors who come to Singapore for a long, long time to come.

Our Population

Let me now talk about our population. If we want our economy to grow, if we want to be strong internationally, then we need a growing population and not just numbers but also talents in every field in Singapore. Today many more Singaporeans are living, working, travelling, operating abroad, studying abroad. The doors are open to us, to a broad range of Singaporeans not just at the top but across the board and not only are the doors open but we're being headhunted. American universities, Ivy League now admits students from overseas and they do it on a needs-blind basis. What does it mean needs-blind? It means if you need they will take care of you. If you can't afford to pay the fees they will help you to pay the fees or help you to find the work. If you're outstanding, they will give you a full fee scholarship, no bond. PSC has full fee scholarship five years. We are competing with them and

in a few cases, we've had students who have accepted the American university scholarship and turned down the PSC. So, we are being targeted. JC students to university, Poly students graduating, doing well, they also are being targeted, sought after. I went to Sydney, visited the university of New South Wales because they're setting up a university here. They asked me to give away some awards. I went, I gave away the awards. I said what are these awards? They said these are awards given to the top poly students from Singapore who go to study at the University of New South Wales, donated by alumni from Singapore. We have poly students there, I met them, they are all doing very well, bright, able, ambitious and many opportunities open and good for them. The Vice-Chancellor told me "we are happy to take them in as students but we are even happier when they stay".

So I came back, I asked NUS and NTU "Have you got any scholarships for top poly students?" They said "We are getting them soon."

So we are getting targeted and our workers are getting targeted. In the region, in China when companies look for chief financial officers, they look for Singaporeans, capable well-trained, speak mandarin, honest, not so easy to find. But from Singapore, our standards are high, they will take them. In the Middle East, hotels are hiring people, looking for people who have worked in Singapore, Singapore experience. In fact, foreign workers who have had experience in Singapore are in demand. So the shipyard workers after they spend four years or six years here, they go to the Middle East – high demand, qualified, no doubt about their abilities. I've been asking MOM, "Can't we persuade them to stay here, not six years, maybe eight years, 10 years, don't let them help our competitors?" We are trying but it's a global market and we are in demand. We have to accept this reality. In fact,

it's good. Our universities and polys have high-standing. Singaporeans are in demand everywhere and the opportunities are there, go for it. We respect the choice of those who work overseas. In fact, we encourage Singaporeans to go abroad, spend time abroad, gain experience, understand how the world operates and then come back to Singapore. But of course, while it's good to have people abroad, we also hope that they don't spend all their life there and at some stage, they will decide to come back to Singapore. We also worry, we worry because if every trained and skilled Singaporean is abroad, then who is going to be here in Singapore, *jaga rumah*, looking after the home, keeping Singapore dynamic, vibrant, beating? If we have so many people overseas but not many in Singapore, where will the next generation of Singaporeans come from? How will we get talented and skilled Singaporeans to keep this place going? What can we do?

I think there are three things we have to do. One, we have to maintain strong links with the Singaporeans who are abroad, with our overseas network so that they become a strength for us and not a loss. Two, we need to encourage, make sure that we have enough babies and three, we need immigration, welcome talent to come to Singapore. I will only talk about our overseas network briefly and then talk about immigration because babies is a subject you know about. It's just a matter of having the babies. First of all, overseas Singaporeans, we have got to keep in touch with our network overseas. We have been doing it in various ways, ad hoc. We've set up now an Overseas Singaporean Unit, an OSU in Prime Minister's Office. Wong Kan Seng is supervising this and the idea of the OSU is to engage Singaporeans overseas, keep them updated, make sure that they know what's happening in Singapore, keep them part of our global family. And we want to do this not just as the government

taking the initiative but also to help the students or the overseas Singaporeans take the initiative, organize and link up with Singapore. For example, yesterday there was a little conference in Singapore called Confluence 2006. Teo Chee Hean went. It was an initiative by a student who was in UCL, University College London. He studied law there, he wanted to organize an event to have all the Singapore students who are overseas who happen to be back now on holiday in Singapore to gather together and to be able to have a dialogue. They took the initiative, they organized it, 900 people showed up. I think they had a good discussion with the ministers and I think this is something we should encourage. In fact some of these organizers will be invited to tea. We need to link up with them, serious events, not so serious events. Recently there was a chilli crab festival in New York and London, supposed to be for foreigners but I imagine a lot of Singaporeans must have showed up and why not, it's a social occasion. Let's help them network, let's help them get together. If it has to be laksa, bak kut teh, Tiger beer so be it.

We also have to help Singaporeans to come back and when they are ready to come back to link them up so that they can find jobs, to link them up so that their children can get into schools and to help them to integrate back in smoothly. So when they come back, you don't have a crashing of gears and suddenly from a different environment, you come back to Singapore, such a shock that you may go off again. It takes some adjustment and some getting used to be back in Singapore and I think we can do a lot to help them to merge in. The Overseas Singapore Unit is going to be launching its online portal soon. It's the best way to keep in touch with everybody. Wong Kan Seng is going to be in China and we will be launching it in Shanghai where I think there are 7,000 overseas Singaporeans. We need to use such links, help

them link up with one another, help Singaporeans in Singapore link up with the people who are abroad.

First, we must deal with our diaspora to make them part of the family and treat them as part of the family. Secondly, we must continue to promote immigration into Singapore because just as we accept that Singaporeans have the world as their oyster, so too we must promote immigration here and let this be one of the options which talent from around the world will look for when they are considering where to go and live. Many countries are doing this. The Australians are working hard at it, the Canadians are working hard at it. Even the Americans have lucky draws for Green Cards. You know what a green card is? It's a PR. Even China is scouting for talent. China with 1,300 million people, looking for talent. They're offering scholarships to top students from other countries. Their professional football teams are hiring foreign footballers. They want to get into the World Cup Finals. We must do the same. We have to do this. We are setting up a Citizenship and Population Unit also in PMO. So we will have two, one OSU Overseas Singaporeans, one Citizenship and Population to bring people into Singapore.

We have to promote our immigration programme overseas. Countries know, people know Singapore. They no longer think that Singapore is somewhere in China. They know Singapore is special, they even have heard of the little red dot but they don't know that Singapore is out looking for talent. If you go to Channel News Asia website or the Straits Times Interactive website, you will find the banner ad on top, click on this, check out your eligibility for Australian PR, or Green Card, give it a try. That should be the Singapore advertisement down there. Our CPU, our Citizenship and Population Unit, click here, application form for Singapore PR will go to you by email. That's what we need to do, get our message, get people to be

interested. Then we can choose and have good ones, capable, able to make a contribution, join Singapore.

We must look for all kinds of talent. It's not just numbers. We're looking for people with ability, with drive, with initiative and ideas and not just one kind of initiative and ideas, graduates, or professionals or bankers and lawyers, but all kinds. Let me give you some examples. Mustaq, Mustaq Ahmad. You've heard of Mustafa's. Mr Mustaq Ahmad, he was an immigrant. He came from Uttar Pradesh in India as a young boy. He has made a very successful business here. Now it's a shopper's paradise, 24/7 and it's not just Indian tourists who shop at Mustafa's now. Singaporeans go there to shop because it's good, it's cheap, wide range, fresh products. More than 1,000 staff work for him. People who think that if you have a foreigner come here, he's taking away a Singaporean job, you are wrong. You get the right foreigner here, he creates thousands of jobs for Singaporeans like Mr Mustaq and you need to get more people like him.

There are other talents. Some of you may know David Gan. He's a celebrity hairstylist. According to the newspapers, it costs \$250 a haircut. He came here from Malaysia to work. He has been here 22 years. Recently, he got his citizenship last December and he said it was the best Christmas present he had ever received because "Singapore groomed me, gave me many opportunities. I felt Singaporean in my heart for the past 12 years". If you go on paper qualifications, he will not qualify. But you go on talent skill, he has something which most of us don't have. You want people who don't have that paper but have that brain and that initiative. Not easy to find and sometimes, they get away. I give you one example where I wish where we got the fellow. A Chinese illegal immigrant came to Singapore. We found him, we kicked him out. He changed his passport, he got back in. When

next we found him, he was running at least five hawker stalls. He was employing at least 11 PRC Chinese. I don't know whether legal or illegal and quite a number more of Singaporeans. We suspect he had even bigger business but we couldn't prove but unfortunately because he was a second-time illegal immigrant, we had to throw him out again. So one day we should get him back and we should get other people like that to come back and to come to Singapore because they have the spunk, the drive and they will make it with sheer grit and get to the top one day.

Singapore offers something unique. We are an Asian society with an Asian heritage and culture and roots and yet we are an open and a cosmopolitan society. We use English as a common language, we keep our mother tongues and our cultures intact and alive and people from many cultures and backgrounds can come here, live here, be comfortable here and enjoy, integrate into our society. Become Singapore and yet retain what is unique about them and the links which they have back to their own cultures, their own homelands, their own sense of identity. And this is not just the three major races, Chinese or the Indians or the Malays but also many other smaller groups. In the earlier generations, we had Parsis, we had Jews from Iraq, we had Armenians, we had Arabs – little, little groups came to Singapore and made their home here and made their contribution here. Today, we get people from all over the world too. We have people from Turkey, there are Portuguese, somebody from Venezuela, somebody from Morocco, even a Korean or two, some Russians. And they add colour and diversity to this society. So our cuisine is something special. Singaporeans love food. You want Korean ginseng chicken, you can get the real thing cooked by a Korean. You want Arab food, you go to Arab Street, you can eat shawarma, which is shish kebab, you can smoke the hubble-bubble, the waterpipe – now

harder because new rules on no smoking – but it's something different for Singapore. So when we get Middle Eastern visitors, they go to Arab Street, they feel very much at home. They are very happy. And we have other customs too. Recently, there was a splendid wedding in Singapore. The groom came riding on a white horse. He was a Marwari, it's an Indian group, Indian businessman, very successful caste. So the zoo is now thinking of going into the service of providing horses and elephants for weddings. I think it's good. But I would say this works both ways. Because we are open and cosmopolitan, so the foreigners come here and they are comfortable here. But we want to be open and cosmopolitan, and that is why we need the foreigners to come to add to our colour, to make this a special exciting, diverse, cosmopolitan place. Then we can remain special and become even better than the Singapore that we have been. So we encourage immigrants to keep their cultures and their languages alive, to keep the links with the countries of origin and one of the ways to do this is language. So in schools, in education, the Ministry of Education will do more to support the study of foreign languages. Wherever there is demand, Hindi, Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, we will make it easy for the foreign students to learn this and in fact we will make it easy for Singaporeans who want to learn these languages as third languages because it will also help to prepare Singaporeans to link up with the opportunities outside especially I think in Southeast Asia and in the Middle East.

So, there are things which we can do as a government in order to open our doors and bring immigrants in. But more importantly, as a society, we as Singaporeans, each one of us, we have to welcome immigrants. Welcome new immigrants. I know that some Singaporeans don't agree. They have reservations, they worried about the competition, they are unhappy that immigrants come here, don't do national service or maybe they just don't like

immigrants living next to them. I mean, once in a while, I hear stories of HDB residents who complain to the media that some immigrants have moved in, foreigners, they don't feel safe. Please move them away or compensate the HDB resident. It affects the environment.

I understand these concerns because somebody new coming in, fitting in – they are different. A Chinese-Chinese is different from a Singapore-Chinese. An Indian-Indian is different from a Singapore Indian. In fact when I met Mr Koizumi last year and I told him, you know we are bringing in Chinese-Chinese, Indian-Indians, he looked at me, he said “Chinese-Chinese?” I had to explain, “Yeah, indeed, they come from China. Singapore Chinese come from Singapore. We are different.”

But we are different doesn't mean we have to reject them. We have to take a big-hearted approach. Our forefathers were immigrants too. If they had been kept out of Singapore, we wouldn't be here today. And to grow and flourish, we must invite people to come who can help us to achieve our goals. And if they come from China, or India or Russia, well, if they can integrate into our society, and make a contribution, I say they are Singaporean too. They may not do NS but their sons will do NS and that is the way to build a Singapore for Singaporeans. That is the difference between American and Europe. In America, they take people from all over the world. They don't become fully American immediately but you will have Russian-American, Chinese-American, Korean-American, German-American, African-American, Latin-American, Spanish-American and so on. You hyphenate. So I know that you are not quite the same but you are half American already. And in the next generation, well, you are more American after four-five generations, the name is different but actually you speak the same twang.

The Europeans don't do that. You don't have Chinese-Germans, American-Germans, Singaporean-Germans. Not possible. The society is different. It's not that just you don't have Chinese-German. If you are a Chinese and living in Germany, you will find it very hard, you cannot get integrated into the society and, therefore, it's a tremendous competitive disadvantage which the Europeans have compared to the United States and we have to be more like the US than like the Europeans and we can have, we will hyphenate, Australian-Singaporean, Chinese-Singaporeans, Chinese-Chinese Singaporeans. But make them one of us and if we meet one of them, let's be friendly, let's go out of our way to show them around, help them, make them feel at home. If you are a taxi driver and somebody comes into your taxi and speaks with a Chinese mainland accent, show him around, tell him where to go, he may already know if he is here for sometime but show him to the right place. Don't take him for a longer drive. It's a small example but it is what we should look out for as a mindset and attitude. Of course, the immigrants also have to make the effort to fit in, participate in community activities, which many of them do. We see them at National Day dinners, our block parties, they come assiduously. And they tell you, "In the country where I come from, you never have a chance to have a block party to meet the MP or the Minister but in Singapore, you can if you participate." Their children study in our schools, often do well. So even if the first generation is not completely Singaporean, the second generation growing up here will be and will contribute to Singapore.

So this year we have had quite a number of foreign students who have become Singaporeans, who have got scholarships. One girl got the President's Scholarship from China, another boy also from China took up citizenship, got an SAF Scholarship. So he is going to

serve much longer than two-and-a-half years and a third one also a boy from India. He is taking up an overseas merit scholarship, becoming a teacher. All children of immigrants came here late maybe eight, nine years old or early teens, become Singaporean, almost speak Singlish.

So I met the OMS scholar, Shyam Srinivasan. He came at 14. He went to Geylang Methodist Secondary School, neighbourhood school but did good for him. Then he went to Victoria Junior College. Now, he has taken up citizenship, obtained a scholarship. When he finishes, comes back, completes his NS, I think when he goes into classrooms, he will be helping us to educate the next generation of Singaporeans. And we want many more like them. We can give more scholarships, we are not short of scholarships. What we are short of is talent and the more we can get our talent, as Phillip Yeo says “kidnap them”, I think the better off we will be.

The Digital Age

Besides the population issue, another thing which is happening to us right now and it's going to have a big impact on us is the digital age. The new technologies, the Internet, handphones, PDAs, all kinds of things which beep, which vibrate, which communicate, which connect us to cyberspace, not in Heaven but somewhere on Earth. It is a completely different world. We haven't talked about it but you just think back one generation how things have changed. When I was in university, away three years, came back once. I telephoned home three times, once a year to report results. Very big event, very difficult to set up, costs a lot of money, you speak for three minutes, you put down the phone. Now, families communicate across the world as if they were side by side. I met one mother who told me my daughter is in London, a teenager. Every night she gets home, she will SMS me to tell me she has

got home safely. I met another father, this one a grassroots leader in West Coast with Iswaran, his son is in Florida, grown up, married but everyday, he will talk to his son, video-camera, MSN. Microsoft Network. Almost free. It's instant. If he is on the other side of the world, you will call him, if he is two tables away from you, you will also telephone call him. So we have changed. How we think and concentrate has changed. When I used to study or when I work now still, I turn off the music, I go to a quiet place, I open one file, I focus on one major thing because then you bring all your powers to bear and you make the right decision.

Now children are multi-tasking. At least they tell me they are multi-tasking. I watch mine, I am sure you watch yours too. Homework open, music, earphones, Internet chat, game. And I am told you are not only surfing but multi-surfing because if you surf one site it is boring, but if you have three or four at once any time you can just flick. Need any information in the world, just Google it. If I ask them what is an encyclopaedia, they will say "Google it". So attention spans have gotten shorter, when you are bored just switch. It's a different way of thinking, a different approach to life. How we get to know one another, how we establish trust and links with one another has changed. The older generation worked face to face. Mr Lim Kim San always used to say he hates e-mail because you can't feel the person. You call a person sit in front of you, you talk to him, you exchange views with him, you get a sense what's going on, what he really thinks and then you can make a decision. E-mail back and forth, you lead to misunderstanding. But now young people they are making friends on the Internet. They never meet one another but exchange photographs on MySpace. What is MySpace? It's a place where you paste your photographs and the photographs can make friends with each other. And I am told some young people even get married on the

Internet. I don't recommend it. So it's a different world but it's one in which I think Singaporeans will do well.

Our people take very easily to IT. It has opened up many opportunities for us, for our economy, lots of jobs which Singaporeans can do and broader benefits for the whole economy. Without IT, PSA would be out of business. Without IT, we wouldn't be a banking hub. Without IT, Changi Airport wouldn't be able to be a first-class airport. But with IT we make the most of our talents and our brains. And with IT we also become connected as a more participative society if we make the effort.

And we have come a long way, exploiting IT, making it a pervasive part of our lives. Singaporeans have done lots and lots of things on line. So if you go into cyberspace, you will find Singapore in many places. I trawled a few which I would like to share with you. Let me start with food which is nearest to Singaporeans' hearts. This is a food website call Chubby Hubby. Very popular, lots of food, lots of dishes, lots of interesting places to eat. But the web is not just for individuals and for blogs. It's also for communities to gather for people to share interest to work to exchange with one another, to pursue their passions together. So the next picture shows you one such website. It's Club Snap. It's a photography website for enthusiasts, to critique one another's work, to organize activities, and to share and display their successes, very popular. Young and old now go on to the Internet.

The young, even children, have blogs and some of the blogs are quite good. This one is a blog by a little girl called Li Ying done together with her father and obviously they are very proud of what they have done and proud of the family. And there are many other such. Old people also put up blogs. This one is called Bullockcartwater, ngau che soi (•••). So writing about the neighbourhood,

festivals, food, the people, the activities, the place, the ties that bind us to Singapore. In this case, Chinatown. The next slide you may have seen. Talkingcock.com. If you want humour, you go there. Some of the jokes are not bad. Not all of them. The next slide is not so funny but very popular. Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore. Got the tax questions, ask IRAS. Because two-thirds of Singaporeans pay their income tax on this website.

So across the board, whether it's entertainment, whether it's culture, whether it's personal interest, whether it's community, whether it's government, we are there and we are determined to take full advantage of all the digital opportunities which are opening up. We are building the infrastructure in Singapore. The Infocomm Development Authority plans to wire up the whole country so that it's wired and wireless. Fully connected, wired so all the homes, all the offices eventually will have fibre to the home. That means very high speed connection and all the public places will be wireless. Anytime, anywhere, anyone. So you can just go on, start up your laptop or your PDA or Skype and communicate. So we will be fully into the cyber world.

We are preparing our young for this new age. We have made IT, the Internet an integral part of our school life. Many experiments go on. Some have gone even further than others. You look at the polytechnics, what Republic Poly has done. Every student has a notebook, the whole campus is Wi-Fi, wireless connected. You hand up your tutorials electronically, you do the homework on your notebook, you pass up on-line. At 11 o'clock at night, if you haven't passed up your homework, the site logs off, too late, you are done for. So we are completely prepared for this and we are going to include every Singaporean in this whether you are poor or not, whether you are young or old, you will be part of this. So we have got all sorts of

schemes to help lower income families with school-going children to own PCs, to access the Internet, to be able to do their homework, their projects, same as their peers. So nobody is left behind. We cannot have a digital divide splitting Singaporeans those who know and have computers from those who don't know and don't have. And older people are one of those groups who need extra help connecting up to computers. So we will work with them in the community centres. We have got centres called CitizenConnect. We have got Internet access for the old folks and for those who are not so familiar. We have helpers to help them and to make them comfortable, we have helpers with a little bit of grey hair, so that you would understand their problem and will be able to communicate with them and get them to be comfortable. So with the digital age, I think we are going to move ahead. But we also must know some of the problems which the digital age will bring. It will change the texture of our society because it will also create new problems which need to be managed. We have more information, faster information, but at the same time, not necessarily more accurate information. There will be half-truths and untruths which will circulate and you wouldn't know which is which readily and there will be good views but also bad views extremist views which will divide our society. And the terrorist groups, the Jihadi groups, they are on the Internet, recruiting, spreading their message, preparing attacks and we have to know this. And apart from specific bad things, you also have a new phenomenon that you are in so many places on the Internet that you have to make an effort to come back and be in the same place together. We used to say broadcasting, that means you put out a channel, TV station, or TV programme, everybody watches, broad segment of the population. Now they say narrow casting. I have this special interest in Frisbee or whatever it is, I aim for this group of the audience. That group has a different interest. He is watching a different

channel. This group, the third group, another channel. So if you have got cable TV, you may 100 channels. We are all in different places and to bring us all together, to celebrate National Day or watch the parade, you need to make an extra effort to come together, to be a nation.

So these are new challenges and our society has to adapt to them. We have got to learn and practise new habits, especially the young people. First of all, be sceptical. Don't believe every thing you see, not every thing which is published is true. Know what is right or wrong and be restrained, don't overreact, you see something, you get excited, you work up your friends, your friends work you up, all of a sudden, you have gone and got aroused, done something, tomorrow you regret it. And we have got to protect ourselves from the bad things on the Internet, the negatives. The laws still apply and if somebody publishes racist ideas in a blog, we will track him down and we will take him to task according to the law as we have done. So, our society has to evolve, our media has to evolve, the mainstream media, television, newspapers, radio. They are under siege, they worry that all the eyeballs will go somewhere else. And they have to find ways to hold these eyeballs to keep making sure that they are relevant and they can fulfil their role which they have an important role to play. So they have to adapt but they have to remain objective, maintain a high quality newspaper and if you read something in the Straits Times or on CNA, you must know that it's real, it's quite different from reading this say on Talkingcock.com. You know which is the serious place and which one is for fun. Inform, educate, entertain, but play a constructive role in a new way in Singapore.

The Government has to adapt to the digital age. First of all, we need to find leaders who are of that age group, and that's what we have been doing. That's why in this

election, we fielded a lot of people who are below 40 years old and we call them the P65 generation and they are reaching out to the young generation, understanding the young, being in tune with them, same wavelength, knowing how they react, how to move and motivate this group. But this is P65. By the next election, the P65 will not be so old. We better be P70 or maybe P75 but we have to move with the times and be with that generation. We still need to get our message across. We will use the new media, multimedia, podcast, broadcast, all these things which you get in the Internet, or somebody sends to you by email, I think our ministries, our agencies have to experiment, have to try it out. They are trying it out in other countries. In America, I told you about MySpace where you post your pictures, the US Marine Corp has a picture in MySpace. They are making friends, hoping to get recruits. I think the Singapore Armed Forces maybe should also have a picture in MySpace. Singapore Police Force too. Maybe the PAP should be in MySpace because this is one of the mediums you are reaching out to. The multinationals are using blogs to communicate. Companies like Microsoft have staff who have blogs. Their politicians instead of sending out newsletters, they are spending time recording podcasts, putting podcasts on their websites. So their supporters will download, will listen will get their message. So we have to update, we have to try this out and we have to move with the times and our laws have to change, like our laws governing podcasts during elections or our laws on political videos, these are things which we have to update as we go along.

So we have to adapt to our message and our approach. We can't just do the old way, just issue statements and rebuttals. I mean there is a standard form. You said this, I say this, you are wrong here. This is what it should be. I think we have to use all ways to get our message across, art, humour, wit, get our point across and be able to laugh

at ourselves because if we can't laugh at ourselves and we are standing on the pedestal, somebody is going to knock you down. So last year, for the rally I showed two little clips in a very small way, putting my toe into the water – “Tau Gay Not Enough” and “Tau Gay Never Enough”. That's a harmless form of the new media but in fact, we have some serious decisions to make because we have to decide how far to go, what tone to set and it's not just all fun and games. You put out a funny podcast. Then what will I do? I will hire Jack Neo to be my National Day Rally adviser. It will be a fun time, we will enjoy thoroughly, go home totally entertained but is this the way to deal serious issues? And the problem is it wouldn't stop with fun and games. You will go to distortions, you will go to half-truths, you will go untruths, the tone of the debate will go down eventually, you race to the bottom.

You look at what has happened in other countries where the media are unrestrained where they have just gone and let go. Philippines, Taiwan, so much creative energy goes into political entertainment that even some of their own people who are more thoughtful sit back and worry and say “Is this really the way for our society to go”? So there was one commentary recently from somebody who talked about Taiwan. There is a Taiwanese TV programme called quan min luan jiang (••••). That means the whole of the citizenry talks rubbish. It's a very funny programme. It's on cable, a lot of Singaporeans watch it. So this commentary said quan min luan jiang (••••) is fine and now they have quan min kai jiang (••••). That means we just open up and talk. But what about quan min hao hao jiang (•••••) ? In other words, all of the people sincerely sit down seriously discuss serious problems. How do you get that message through? And that is the message which we want to keep. We have got to keep this government serious and responsible. We can't govern based on jokes, we can't govern based on soundbites, or

distortions. You have to have debates which will add reasons, which will add enlightenment, which will come to a conclusion and not just end up in angry words and name calling or if you take the Taiwanese Parliament, where they throw things at each other and even the women are part of the battle. Yes, it's good to be passionate, to care enough about what's happening in the country, to want to fight for what you believe in, not just say something better still do something. But passion and emotion must also be balanced by logic, thinking, calmness and wisdom. There is no point just working people up, running down our institutions because at the end you make our problems harder, not easier to solve. It leads to nowhere. We have to debate. If we didn't have a debate, I think we will come to the wrong conclusion but you must have debate to work out solutions for the larger good and for the longer term.

Singapore is changing and we must change. Some things are changing quickly. Other things take a little bit longer. There are few things which we should not change, which are fundamental to us. Like our integrity, caring for others, our sense of being special and unique and our passion for Singapore. That cannot change. But other things have to change. Sometimes it takes time. I think we have to work at it, plug at it and continue to find our way forward. By all means, if you think the government is doing something wrong, criticize us, criticize the government, criticize the leaders but be prepared to stand by your criticisms, to back up what you say and let's argue it out. If the government disagrees, then we have to respond, if you criticize the government and the government does not respond, then the government has not taken you seriously. Number one, it does not deserve to be here. Number two, because if we do not respond, untruths would be repeated and will be believed and eventually will be treated as facts and the government and the leaders will lose the respect of the population and the moral authority to govern. So we

argue, sometimes we argue fiercely but we should not take that as a sign that we are not open. Openness doesn't mean just lovey-dovey. Openness means being prepared to be candid, to be direct and to discuss very serious things very seriously.

So I give you the example of Mr Brown's column in Today. Some of you may have read it, some of you may not. But it hit out wildly at the government and in a very mocking and dismissive sort of tone. So MICA replied. How can you not reply? And some Singaporeans feel we were too harsh, we should have been gentler or may be just even accepted it. It's just niceness. He didn't mean us any harm.

Well, my view is like this. Mr Brown is a very talented man. In fact, he is Mr Lee Kim Mun. If you listen to his podcasts, they are hilarious. And he is entitled to his views and entitled to express them. But when he takes on the government and makes serious accusations, as he did in this case, because he said the government suppressed information before the elections which was awkward and only let it out afterwards. Then the government has to respond. Firstly, to set the record straight and secondly, to signal that this is really not the way to carry on a public debate on national issues and especially not in the mainstream media.

So we are moving forward. I would say whatever the risks in this new world, whatever the uncertainties, we have to press on, move ahead open up. You cannot freeze in the headlights, take fright and just stop in your tracks. You will be run over. You have to keep on moving forward, open up and this basic approach cannot change. We don't have all the answers. We don't know what all the risks are. We are feeling our way forward step by step as Deng Xiaoping used to say *mo zhe shi zi guo he* (•••••),

looking for stone at a time as you cross the river. So we will take it step by step in an orderly way. We don't expect everybody to agree all the time. In fact, if we all agree all the time, something must be wrong with us. So you don't want everybody to be singing the same note but at least we should be in the same room and if we are playing music, then you should be playing jazz and improvising and it should be, we're each saying different things, but it blends together and it's a Singapore tone, Singapore tune and Singapore moves forward and that's the way we should be in the digital age.

Singapore Heartware

Because our people are all over the world and because we are bringing in people from all over the world and because of the digital age, bombarding us with new ideas, and all kinds of new communications, it becomes all the more important that we strengthen our heartware, our emotional ties which bind Singaporeans to Singapore and to one another. It's critical in this age. You may be more connected than ever but to be connected as a people, as one Singapore, as four million of us, I think that's something which we have to make the effort to do. How do we get Singaporeans to feel this? To feel that we are Singaporean, that we belong here. We are not just some citizens in cyberspace, passports issued by the Republic of Cyberspace. I think you have to do it in many ways. First, we have to tell the Singapore story and we must know the Singapore story.

This year, several of our first generation leaders passed away. Mr Lim Kim San recently, Mr Rajaratnam in February and last December, Mr Devan Nair. We had commemorations for the events. Many Singaporeans didn't know these people, what they had done. They didn't know that Mr Rajaratnam wrote the pledge or that Mr Lim

Kim San was the reason that we all have homes in HDB flats. This is a new generation and we have to get them to know so that you will feel and from feeling, then you will belong and understand the core part of the Singapore story, how we got here. So I think parents and grandparents have a role to play. You have to tell the stories to your children, to your grandchildren to know not only what happened but how you feel about it, to feel that this is their story and to continue to want to write this story into the next chapter and the next volume.

The schools have a lot to do with this because when you go to school, you are not just learning facts or knowledge, you are also learning how to become a Singaporean. So 10 years ago, we launched a programme which we called the National Education programme in 1997. I met some teachers recently. I asked them "What's happened? You are teaching the kids. Are you making progress?" They said, "Yes, we are making progress. We are doing well, we believe in this and we are passionate about it. But don't please call it National Education because the kids will switch off because they will think it is a book subject to mug". It is not a mugging subject. It is something you want people to feel, to develop, to feel and sense as a community. So, we have kids who go overseas and do projects in other countries and come back and they know why Singapore is different. We have kids who do projects in our own community. They help hospice patients, they come back, they know there are others in the community less fortunate than them who need help. Through all these activities, they will build character, resilience, they will develop leadership, team spirit and they will feel that this is their Singapore and this is what they must take care of. How do I know we have made progress? If I give an exam, I won't know because if they give me the right answer, it maybe they studied the right question. But if you see that they do, what they, how they expressed

themselves, how they lived, I think you can see that something has sunk home. Recently, we had a project to get students to do some little movies about social cohesion about Singapore. And the students surprised us with the results. They were outstanding and I'd like to show you just two of the movies. The first one is about a little lump of clay.

(Videoclip : "[Singapore in Clay](#)")

Not bad. I'll show you a second one, this is sand art. So, it is a little bit subtle, you have to watch carefully. See if you can spot the skydivers.

(Videoclip: "[Singapore in Sand Art](#)")

CHIJ St Joseph's Convent - the girls are here. I think they did well. It shows the new generation has got something special. They understand, they feel and they also got the digital age skills to do it. So, I think that we are getting somewhere in schools. But heartware isn't just something we do in schools. It is also about getting all Singaporeans and to engage and participate in shaping the character and the life of our society. To feel passionately about something in our country, to get together to do something about it and work something out for the community. And this is happening at all levels. It is not something which the government can force or direct but we can foster it and we can allow it to happen and when it happens, I think we can recognize it and celebrate it. I just give you three small examples. One, is a group of young people in West Coast, Iswaran's area, who got together after the Boxing Day Tsunami to help people in Aceh. They got together, they got organized. I think there are 50 or 60 of them altogether. They went to Aceh, they helped to rebuild a primary school, they came back. I think another group went. Altogether now they have done several rotations of

people and new young people joined in and flow. They have done two primary schools and one community radio station and in the process they have made friends with one another. In fact I hear two of them after getting into the project, fell in love and got married. So, it is not directed by us. We help them but they got organized, they delivered them. They did something which they felt was worth doing together with other Singaporeans.

We have got people who care passionately about the environment. A few years ago, Tanjung Chek Jawa. They got organized and they persuaded Mah Bow Tan to save Tanjung Chek Jawa and persuaded the Cabinet too. But they continued to work.

There is a Waterways Watch Society in Singapore. It is founded by a retired banker, Mr Eugene Heng and they are a group of volunteers and on weekends they cruise along the Kallang River or the Singapore River and make sure that it is clean and watch out for anybody who maybe littering. And they are also working with the schools to raise awareness. For example, St. Andrews School has adopted that segment of the Kallang River which flows past the school and they can use it for water sports. It's purely for the community but they feel strongly about it. They devote time to it and you need people like this, if you are going to have a Marina Bay which is beautiful and clean and which we will all be able to enjoy. So that is another example.

We have young people, who are now devoting their time to alumni matters. Our university graduates, when they graduate, now they donate, they help the university organize things. SMU, recently one young man fresh out of university, just started working, Mr Darren Lim and he has decided that he will donate part of his salary every year back to the university to fund part of a scholarship for

one accountancy student because he feels grateful and he would like others to come along. So, it is the principle. He benefited from what others have planted before him and he is going to plant something and leave a legacy for the next generation. A way of thanking his parents for giving him an education.

So, these are the ingredients of heartware. They are individuals pieces, they are not all organized top down plans but they show people who care, they show people who are doing things and they show people who will get together and will feel that Singapore is a place where I did these things and I belong because I contributed and I made it happen and I made it different.

Conclusion

These are some of the key issues that will affect Singapore's future in a rapidly changing world. What will Singapore be like 10 or 15 years from now? We can't tell because it depends on what happens in the outside world. The outlook is bright but there are risks and there are bound to be surprises. But we know what we are aiming for and we are going to do our best to get it. We are aiming for an economy which will bring good job, good jobs from people who are senior citizens, who learn to operate a washing machine in a hawker centre, to a fund manager who is servicing clients around the world. We will have an economy which creates opportunities for people, to fulfil their dreams to pursue what they believe in, to create something new, to make their own lives better and make the lives of their fellow men better. We will be a society with an outstanding living environment. First class whether it is HDB or private, something where all the amenities are there, where the community feels at home, where if you are old or disabled, you can get around, there will be lifts on every floor and good amenities for all and

we will have education, first-class education to prepare people for the digital age and make sure that all of us are on the top side of the rich-poor divide. And everyone of us has skills, everyone of us would be able to make a living for ourselves and pursue many paths to success. We will be an open, inclusive society where we all have a place, where we can all contribute, we all care for one another as one people and one nation, whatever our race, religion or background. These are ambitious goals but I think we can achieve them. We have what it takes. I think if we make up our minds we will get there. We have the energy, the drive the spirit and we will do something special for ourselves.

You have all been watching World Cup recently. Let me tell you three Singapore World Cup stories. One is Shamsul Maidin. He was a footballer in the Police team. He found he had a talent as a referee. He went and refereed four World Cup games and was voted the Best World Cup referee on ESPN. I think we are proud of him.

There is a Robot World Cup. You may not have heard of it. It's held in Germany also. It is a competition between robots which have been trained to play soccer. We have been champions, world champions for three years. And the team, the team is from Nanyang Polytechnic and is led by a lecturer, Mr Leong Kum Cheong.

Even in cooking we have World Cup. And our cooks do well. Last year our chefs went to a culinary world masters in Basel in Switzerland and came first. This year Executive Chef Randy Chow and his team are going to be competing in the Culinary World Cup in Luxembourg. We haven't won yet but we wish them well.

Ours is an improbable nation. We are a small country in an uncertain world. We always worry about the future.

We never take anything for granted. Many people have put heart and soul into building what we have today. And through hard work and clear thinking, we have created something unique and something precious in Singapore, a home for all of us. Our forefathers have planted the trees which now provide the shade which we now enjoy. It is now our duty to plant trees and grow them. Trees which would give hope and strength to a new generation and you should do this stuff because you happen to be born here or because you happen to hold the red passport. But because you believe in this mission, you believe in this ideal. You believe that Singapore is something special and worth fighting for. As Mr Rajaratnam said once, "because being Singaporean is not a matter of ancestry but of conviction and choice".

This is one of the most exciting and hopeful times in the history of Asia and in fact in the history of Singapore. Many opportunities are opening up. But the demands would be very different and greater than what we have faced before. We can make these challenges and succeed, provided we have the courage and spirit, make the change, adapt, sacrifice, fight together and win. Make this a land of opportunity and give our children a bright future in a rapidly changing world. Thank you very much.
