

Speech by DPM Teo Chee Hean at the National Citizenship Ceremony 2015 on 2 Aug 2015

“All Singaporeans Building a Better Future Together”

Welcome to the Singapore Family

This afternoon, we formally welcome 150 new citizens living in Pasir RisPunggol who have chosen to be part of our Singapore family. Most of you have studied, worked or lived in Singapore for several years. Some of you are married to Singaporeans or are children of Singaporeans. Others have applied as family units.

By choosing to take up Singapore citizenship, you have demonstrated your commitment to building a better future together with fellow Singaporeans.

Singaporeans, united through our shared values and ideals

Most Singaporeans do not have to go very far in our own family histories, to find a parent, grandparent or great-grandparent who was born overseas, but chose to call Singapore home. Our forefathers came from the region and beyond, but worked hard, united in a common mission to create a better life for themselves and their families. Because of this commitment and hard work of our Pioneers and past generations of Singaporeans, we enjoy multi-racial harmony, peace and stability today. This is the foundation upon which our economy and society has developed, creating many opportunities for all Singaporeans to fulfil our aspirations, our dreams, our hopes.

So what is it that we share in common? It's not just that we live physically in the same space. But we share certain ideals, certain hopes and dreams, which makes us Singaporean and which makes Singapore what it is. It is the values and ideals that we live by, that we choose to live by, and we pledge ourselves to. “One united people regardless of race, language or religion”, “a democratic society based on justice and equality”, “to achieve happiness, prosperity and progress for our nation”.

These are lines from our National Pledge which all of us will take today, which our schoolchildren take every day. These are qualities represented by the five stars on our National Flag. After living through the hardships and tribulations at the birth of independent Singapore, these are the ideals that our Pioneer Generation of Singaporeans yearned for, and were prepared to sacrifice and work for. These are the ideals of our Pioneers that our founding Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew and his colleagues distilled and set out for an independent Singapore. Out of all the different things that we were striving and struggling for, I think they managed to capture the key ideas that make us Singapore, and make us succeed as Singapore. Most importantly, these are the same values and ideals that continue to unite us, and guide us in our daily lives. And in one way or another, these are the ideals that attracted you to Singapore. To come here to work, to live, and to make a future here, because you see that these are ideals worth living for, worth fighting for, and which will bring you and your families a better life. I hope you take some time to visit the exhibition “We, the Citizens of Singapore”, and be inspired by the stories of how Singaporeans live out these shared values and make Singapore what it is.

All Singaporeans building a better future together

6. We celebrate Singapore's 50th birthday this year, in fact, in just a few days' time. Sadly, our Founding Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew is not able to be with us. I think all of us wanted very much for him to be with us for this 50th celebration, but it was not to be. But let us use this

opportunity, to think and to reflect, what can we do to build an even better future together?

Our Pioneers built a multi-racial society out of many races. Many races which in other countries, are in conflict with each other and find difficulty living together with each other. But we build a peaceful and harmonious multiracial society. Let us continue to stand united, regardless of race, language or religion. While we celebrate our diversity, let us also strengthen and deepen what we have in common, which unites us as Singaporeans. Don't let the differences that we may have in our practices, in our culture and in our food and so on, divide us. Let us celebrate the diversity by being committed to be one. While we respect different cultures and practices, let us strengthen our community bonds, and build a more united and resilient society.

Our Pioneers built up civic organisations to lend a helping hand to those who are in need. Today, our civic organisations, self-help groups and religious organisations reach out to those in need, not just within their own communities, but beyond to other communities, to all Singaporeans. This is one way of bonding ourselves together as Singaporeans. We reach out to help each other in times of need. We share our joys, but we share our sorrows as well, and in that way, we lighten our burdens. We have seen several recent heart-warming examples of how Singaporeans care for one another. Just 10 days ago, some 30 public-spirited passers-by came together spontaneously to help a man trapped under a heavy lorry. I think apart from the actual act of helping someone, what was very uplifting was that the people who did it, felt very good about it. And everyone was watching and all Singaporeans also felt very good about it, that we helped each other. And I think that this is the positive spirit that all of us get by working together, helping each other, achieving something which each one alone would not be able to do. Let us continue to strengthen the care and concern we have for each other, for our friends, for our neighbours, for our community.

The collective determination, resourcefulness and resilience of our Pioneers built the Singapore that we have today. Let us resolve to work together to build a better future for all of us. A land of opportunity where our children can fulfil their dreams, and where our elderly can lead healthy, meaningful lives, and make it a place we are all proud to call our home.

Conclusion

As we celebrate SG50, let us take time to reflect on the past, cherish the present, and pull together as one people looking ahead to the future. We look forward to your contributions, as fellow Singaporeans, as we build a better Singapore together, united by our shared values. Majulah Singapura!