



## Speeches

**SPEECH BY MR GOH CHOK TONG, SENIOR MINISTER, AT THE MARINE PARADE NATIONAL DAY DINNER , 02 AUGUST 2009, 8:00 PM AT ROLAND RESTAURANT**

### “Challenge for the Next Generation – Dealing with the Perils of Success”

Friends and Residents of Marine Parade

1. First, let me wish you a Happy National Day. This year is also the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our self-government. We have achieved a lot in 50 years. But more importantly, can we sustain Singapore’s economic growth and prosperity for another 20, 30 years, i.e. another generation? I ask because our success creates its own set of problems. I call them the perils of success. In my view, these perils are even more challenging than the ones I was faced with as Prime Minister. The next generation will have a tough time dealing with them. So tonight, instead of dwelling on our achievements, I want to highlight ten challenges confronting the next generation of Singaporeans and leaders.

#### Success creates its own problems

2. Let me start with the economy. Our economy has grown 125 times from \$2 billion 50 years ago to \$250 billion today. We have overtaken our former colonial master, the UK, in GDP per capita. Singapore is now ranked 4<sup>th</sup> globally in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) terms[1]. UK is ranked 18<sup>th</sup>. Fifty years ago, one Sterling Pound fetched nine Singapore Dollars. Today, one Pound exchanges for less than three Singapore Dollars.

3. **First challenge for the next generation:** Can you maintain Singapore’s high economic growth and keep on improving on our standard of living? Just remember, the world is a very competitive place and our economy has matured. If UK can slip from the top of the chart in GDP per capita, so can Singapore.

4. In the last 50 years, our quality of life has improved by leaps and bounds. Let me illustrate with my personal example. In 1959, thousands of Singaporeans lived in slums and squalor. I was more fortunate. I lived in a rented house but it had no electricity or modern sanitation. Today, more than 90% of Singaporeans own their homes, with electricity and modern sanitation.

5. **Second challenge but this one for the leaders:** How do you convince Singaporeans that their lives will get better when they are already living in good-quality public and private housing? For my generation, it was a big jump in our standard of living when we moved into 3-room HDB flats with modern

amenities.

6. For many years, I cycled 10 kilometres daily to Raffles Institution from my house in Pasir Panjang. That meant another 10 kilometres back, usually in the hot sun. Sometimes, I was caught in the rain. Today, students travel in air-conditioned comfort by cars, buses or MRT. Even when they walk they have linkways to protect them from sun and rain.

7. **Third challenge and question for the Transport Minister:** How do you satisfy the transport demands of the next generation for comfort, convenience, congestion-free travel and punctuality of services and their expectation of affordable fares, ERP and parking charges?

8. We live not only better lives, but also longer and healthier lives. My grandfather and father never made it to 60. I am thankful that I am still around at 68. When we attained self-government, infectious diseases were a major cause of death. My father died of tuberculosis at a young age of 36. We have since cleaned up our streets, improved sanitation and food hygiene, and established a national vaccination programme. Today, infectious diseases make up only a small proportion of deaths. But other diseases have taken over, like cancer, heart diseases, diabetes and kidney failure. These diseases are associated with an affluent lifestyle. They are more expensive to treat.

9. **Fourth challenge and this one for the Health Minister:** Can you stamp out these diseases the way we did with infectious diseases like TB, malaria, typhoid and polio? Can you keep health care costs down and affordable?

10. When we set up our CPF in 1955, our life expectancy was 60, five years more than the retirement age of 55. But our life expectancy has since risen to 80, 18 years more than our current retirement age of 62. And with continuing advances in health care and medical science, we can expect to live to 90 in the near future. If we live till 90, we would probably have to work till 75 to have enough savings for a cosy retirement of 15 years.

11. **Fifth challenge addressed to the Minister for Manpower and Secretary-General of NTUC:** Can you design a new training programme, Workfare and Job Credit Scheme for grandparents and maybe even great-grandparents?

12. To compound the problem, our modernisation has also caused our birth rate to plummet. In 1980, our ever married women<sup>[2]</sup> in their 40s had an average of 4.4 children. As women became more educated and more women joined the workforce, the average number of children dropped to 2.1 by 1997. We started SDU and SDS. We offered baby bonuses and encouraged a more family-friendly environment. They helped. The good news is that the average number of children of ever married women has stabilised at 2.1 for some ten years now. The bad news is that it is only the ever married Singaporeans who are replacing themselves. As a whole population, we are not, because many of our women are not getting married. This is the main reason for our low Total Fertility Rate of 1.28 today. We have educated our women well and they have careers; with careers, come financial independence. Gone are the days when women saw marrying well and having children as a mark of success. This is a good example of progress creating new problems.

13. **Sixth challenge for parents and the young:** What will get our young to marry and have children? Any creative ideas on procreation?

14. The combination of a longer life span and lower fertility rates leads to a fast ageing population. Today, 9% of our population is over 65 years of age. By 2030, it will more than double to 20%. I can already see this ageing population in Marine Parade.

15. **Seventh challenge and questions for the Chairman of the Ministerial Committee on Ageing:** How do we support so many senior citizens? How will we look after our parents and grandparents? Will you build more community hospitals, nursing and old folk homes, and keep them affordable?

16. Another consequence of our success is that we are fast running out of land. In the last fifty years, we have already expanded our land area by more than 20%. Mind you, this is not done through conquest but through land reclamation within our territorial waters.

17. **Eighth challenge and some questions for the Minister for National Development:** How much more land can we reclaim over the next 50 years? As our population and economy continue to grow, how will we deal with the challenge of limited land for economic expansion while preserving sufficient space for housing and recreational needs? Will Singapore be over crowded?

18. Now, let me move on to education. When I graduated 45 years ago, there were very few scholarships for overseas studies. Today, there are hundreds. And hundreds more go overseas on parents' scholarships. Our top students can easily compete with the best anywhere. But our great success in education is also increasing the likelihood of a potential brain drain. We give our young the very best education, and prepare them to be world-ready, entrepreneurial and internationally mobile. Our bright students will be sought after internationally. We are already seeing a trend of more Singaporeans not returning after having studied overseas. I expect this trend to continue and more will settle abroad for work, marriage or other reasons. If more choose to do so, our talent pyramid will be chipped away at the top, with serious consequences for our long-term survival as a nation. I consider this one of the most serious challenges which will threaten Singapore's achievements in future. This challenge cannot be left to a future generation to resolve. It has to be solved now.

19. **Ninth challenge and this one for the Prime Minister, Minister for Education, schools and families:** We have to accept that more Singaporeans will study and work overseas and that some may settle abroad. But how do we bond them to Singapore, physically if possible, and if not, at least emotionally. How do we ensure that most will return home and contribute to Singapore which gave them the foundation for their success? How do we ensure that there will always be a core of honest, able and dedicated Singaporeans to look after the country and their fellowmen?

20. It is not my intention tonight to spoil the mood of our celebration by asking all these questions. What I hope to achieve is to provoke you to think through my key point that in our success are embedded the seeds of new challenges. We have to attend to these perils now even though the brunt of the problems will be borne by the next generation of Singaporeans.

### **Our underlying strengths for continued success**

21. I believe the next generation can overcome these new challenges created by our success. They have at least four factors in their favour.

22. First, we are bequeathing to them ample financial resources. Our healthy reserves will give them the room for policy options to deal with the problems I mentioned earlier, the way we dealt with the current recession with the Jobs Credit Scheme and other measures.

23. Second, how Singapore will perform in future will depend very much on our talent and skills pyramid. On the human resource front, we are continuing to raise the height of our talent pyramid by investing in a 4<sup>th</sup> publicly funded university. We are also setting up the Singapore Institute of Applied Technology which would provide external degrees as an upgrade path for our polytechnic graduates. We are building up R&D capabilities to do cutting-edge research in selected fields with growth potential. If we can out-educate and out-innovate others, create challenging jobs and build a vibrant and gracious society, our oasis will root Singaporeans here and draw in others. As for not reproducing ourselves, to safeguard our future, we are topping up our population through selective immigration of skilled and talented foreigners.

24. Third, we have forged a cohesive society and a national identity from a largely immigrant population of different races, languages, religions and cultures. After the racial and communal tensions of our early years, we have become united by this land that provides equal opportunities for all, where one has the best chance of getting ahead in life so long as one is willing to work hard, regardless of race or religion. We are united by this land where workers, employers and the government work hand-in-hand to tackle unemployment and to create good jobs and good returns for all. We are united by this land that allows everyone to be as successful as his talent and hard work allow him and where we share the fruits of growth with those who lag behind.

25. However, because we have had racial and religious harmony for four decades, we may take the current social cohesion and religious harmony for granted. This is the **last and tenth challenge I have for you tonight**: how do we ensure that Singaporeans of different faiths will continue to mix with one another and respect one another's faith?

26. The next generation must never forget that no matter how harmonious our multi-racial, multi-religious society is today, ours is a society with inherent cracks. We have successfully glued the various pieces together through purposeful, practical integration policies but the fault-lines remain. We have policies to ensure that our public housing estates and schools remain key common secular space where people of all religions and races interact and mix; and where nobody is made to feel uncomfortable whatever his colour or beliefs.

27. The government regards religion as a positive force in our society. Religion offers comfort and solace to the grieving; bestows purpose and meaning to life; and provides spiritual guidance to help us cope with a fast-changing world. But the government itself is secular with Ministers belonging to various religions. It is not a Christian, Buddhist, Taoist or Islamic government. It is a government for all beliefs, including those without a religion. This will remain unchanged. Hence, as a principle, public institutions or private organisations which receive public funding are not permitted to impose or advocate any religious belief or practice. This must remain the foundation of our inter-religious harmony.

28. Singaporeans are getting more religious. Looking ahead, the next generation must watch out for the emergence of compartmentalisation of our society by religion. With rising religiosity, people of like religion may, perhaps unwittingly, begin to form religious enclaves. This applies to adherents of all

religions be they Christians, Muslims, Buddhists or Hindus. It is understandable why they prefer to mix only with people of like faith. But the flip side is that they will socialise less with those of other faiths. If we do not make a conscious effort to mix, over time, Singapore will be a society compartmentalised by religion. The potential for religious misunderstanding and conflict is great.

29. We must also remember that in Singapore, rising religiosity which encroaches on our common secular space, or worse, the practice of other religions, must result in a push-back by the rest. We do not have a serious problem now. Our emotions are calm, our minds are clear and our hearts are open. Hence, it is timely to remind ourselves of the basis of our harmony, and what we must do to safeguard it. This way, we can avert potential problems and maintain the trust and tolerance that bind our various communities together.

30. The fourth factor for my optimism is our system of producing an outstanding political leadership that has the will, integrity, ability, commitment and dedication to look after the interest of the people and the future of our country. There is a younger team in charge who are constantly scanning the horizon for potential problems, working the ground and acquiring experience and connecting with all Singaporeans. They have shown themselves to be not only innovative and creative in solving problems, but also courageous and forward looking, for example, in evolving our political system to meet the aspirations of the next generation. And they are now actively building up the next team of leaders to work with the next generation of Singaporeans on the challenges created by our success.

### Conclusion

31. In the last fifty years, we have gotten rid of squalor and poverty, and brought about racial and religious harmony. We have emerged with first world standards of living and created a strong Singapore identity. This is an achievement that we can be justifiably proud of. But we must not be carried away and think that we can now fly on auto-pilot. In fact, many challenges which are more daunting than those we have faced before remain, and more will arise. As we celebrate our 44<sup>th</sup> National Day and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of self-government, let us humbly reflect on how we have succeeded, learn from our early pain and struggle as a fledgling nation, and stay together as one united people to build an even better future.

32. I wish all of you good health and a bright future!

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### **国务资政吴作栋在马林百列国庆晚宴上华语讲话全文**

**日期: 2009年8月2日(星期日)**

**地点: Roland餐厅**

### **“新一代的挑战: 应对成功带来的隐患”**

各位马林百列的朋友和居民:

1 首先, 让我预祝大家国庆节快乐, 愿大家身体健康, 万事如意。今

年是我国独立44周年，也是我国取得自治的50周年。

2 这50年来，我们取得了非凡的成就。我给大家举一些数据，来说明这一点。

### 自治以来，成绩斐然

3 这些年来，我们的国土扩大了，确切地说，是扩大了百分之20以上。

4 在经济方面，我国的经济增长了125倍。

5 1959年，我住的家，是一间没有电、没有现代卫生设备的房子。当时，很多新加坡人的居住环境比我的还要糟。可是，今天几乎所有的新加坡人都有房子住，而且设备齐全。

6 和以前相比，我们过上好日子了，而且活得更久、更健康。

7 我们在教育方面，也取得骄人的成绩。1964年我大学毕业，当时的劳动队伍当中，只有百分之2的人有大学学历。今天，这个数字是百分之40。

8 总的说来，只是两代人的时间，我国就跻身第一世界国家的行列。

### 成功带来新问题

9 不过，成功往往也会带来新的问题。说得直白一点，我们今天的成功，也可能为我们的将来，埋下衰败的“种子”。我要向大家解释一下，我国未来的领导人和人民将面对一些什么样的挑战。

10 首先，在扩大国土方面，我们已经快要达到极限。在这种情况下，经济的增长将会带动土地和房地产价格的上涨，新加坡将变成一个生活费和营业成本越来越高的城市。面对那些面积比我们大、租金和土地价格比我们低的城市的挑战，我们要如何保持竞争力？

11 第二，我们的寿命越来越长了。长寿固然好，但是，对许多新加坡人来说，他们是否有足够的储蓄维持更长的晚年？

12 第三，我们的生育率达不到人口的替代水平，目前的总生育率，只有1.28。由于年轻的国人教育水平提高了，他们把重点放在事业上，结婚

生孩子变成次要。这样一来，年轻人越来越迟结婚，有一些甚至不结婚。这说明了经济发展取得的成功，也为社会带来了难题。

13 第四，我国的人口正在迅速老化。这是寿命延长和生育率低的结果。将来，谁来照顾我们的老人？我们老化的劳动队伍要如何同其他国家的年轻劳动队伍竞争？

14 第五，我国的教育尽管办得很成功，但也有隐忧。我们教育年轻一代时，加强了他们面对全球竞争的能力、培养了他们的企业精神，使他们能够闯荡天下。实际上，许多年轻国人已经展翅高飞，到海外发展了。可是，他们会不会像每年南飞的大雁一样，最终回归祖国呢？要是他们选择在国外定居，那我国顶尖人才的数量不是减少了吗？我希望大家认真地思考这些问题会带来什么样的后果。

### 对我们的未来充满信心

15 这些都是严峻的挑战。不过，我深信，我们的下一代将能克服这些问题。我对新加坡的前景充满信心。让我告诉大家是什么原因让我那么有信心。

16 第一，我们将给予下一代丰富的财政和人力资源。经过数十年的努力奋斗，今天，我们的外汇储备很雄厚，使我们能够推行雇用补贴计划，保住国人的工作；使我们能够更多地投入教育，更好地培训员工，以打造一支在世界任何角落都肯拼搏的，优秀的劳动队伍。

17 第二，我们在过去的50年里，已经发展成为一个团结一致，凝聚力强的社会。我们对国家有强烈的认同感，并拥有独特的政府体制和价值观。我们引进了有熟练技能的新移民，并把他们融入我们的社会。这些新国民将弥补我们生育率的不足，补充我们的人才库。

18 第三，我们已经建立了一个特有的政治更新制度，通过这个制度，我们能够物色最好的人才，为国服务。我们最近也修改了选举制度，这将使我国的政治更具包容性。总之，新加坡是我们的国家，是我们一起建立起来的家园。我希望国人齐心协力，确保新加坡在国际竞争中，继续保持领先的地位。

### 结语

19 今天，我们欢庆国家独立44周年，让我们以谦逊的心态，回顾过去

的成就, 借鉴往日的经验, 满怀信心, 开创我们的未来。

20 现在, 让我用英语继续演讲。

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**TRANSLATION OF THE SPEECH DELIVERED IN MANDARIN BY SENIOR MINISTER GOH CHOK TONG AT THE MARINE PARADE NATIONAL DAY DINNER AT ROLAND RESTAURANT ON SUNDAY, 2 AUGUST 2009**

**“Challenge for the Next Generation – Dealing with the Perils of Success”**

Friends and Residents of Marine Parade

1. First, let me wish you good health as we celebrate Singapore’s 44th National Day. This year is also the 50th anniversary of self-rule.
2. We have achieved much in the last 50 years. Let me give you some statistics and facts.

**Achievements since self-government**

3. Physically, we have expanded our land area by more than 20 percent.
4. Our economy has also grown by 125 times.
5. In 1959, I lived in a house without electricity and modern sanitation. Many Singaporeans lived in much worse conditions then. Today, nearly all Singaporeans live in proper homes.
6. We not only live better lives but also longer and healthier lives.
7. We have made great strides in educating Singaporeans. When I graduated in 1964, only 2% of our workforce had tertiary education. Today, the figure is 40%.
8. To sum up, we have become a First World country within two generations.

**Success brings new problems**

9. But success brings with it new problems. To put it bluntly, our success may also contain seeds of failure. Tonight, I want to draw your attention to some of these challenges that the next generation of leaders and Singaporeans will be faced with.
10. First, land area. We are reaching the limits of land reclamation. As we continue to grow economically, land and property prices will go up. Singapore will become a more expensive place to live and do business in. Will we lose our competitiveness to cities with more and cheaper land? How do we stay competitive despite higher rentals?
11. Second, we are living longer. It is good to live longer. But for many of us, do we have enough savings to live longer?
12. Third, we are not reproducing ourselves. Our Total Fertility Rate is only 1.28. This is a good example of success creating its own problems. With better education, naturally our young place more emphasis on building their careers. They put marriage and having children on the backburner. Some young Singaporeans are marrying later and later, and some are staying single. This shows that economic success can give rise to

social problems.

13. Fourth, our population is ageing rapidly. This is the result of our living longer and the low Total Fertility Rate. Who will look after our old in future? How does an ageing workforce compete against other countries with a much younger workforce?

14. Fifth, our success in educating our young is also creating new perils. In preparing them to be world-ready, entrepreneurial and internationally mobile, we are also giving them wings to fly far. And many do. Will they come back home like migratory geese? Or will they settle abroad? If so, will this lower the talent pyramid of our population? What are the long-term consequences?

### **Confidence in our future**

15. However, I believe the next generation can overcome these challenges. I have confidence in the future of Singapore. Let me tell you why.

16. First, we are bequeathing the next generation the financial and human resources. After decades of hard work, we now have considerable foreign exchange reserves. Our reserves allowed us to introduce the Jobs Credit Scheme to save jobs. Our resources will also allow us to do more in education and workers training so that our people will always be in demand globally.

17. Second, over last 50 years, we have built a cohesive society. We have become Singaporeans with our own national identity, system of government and values. We can bring in skilled immigrants and successfully integrate them with our society. These new Singaporeans will make up for our low birth rates and top up our talent pool.

18. Third, we have built a unique system of political succession where we look for the best to dedicate themselves to serve Singapore. With the recent changes we have made to our elections system, our politics will be more inclusive. Singapore is our country. We created it together. We want Singaporeans to play a role to keep their country and home at the top of the world league.

### **Conclusion**

19. Today, as we celebrate our 44th year of independence, let us look back on our achievements with humility, draw lessons from our past, and act to secure our future with confidence.

20. Now, let me continue my speech in English.

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[1] Source: IMF.

[2] "Ever married women" refers to those who are married, divorced or widowed.