

PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEN LOONG NATIONAL DAY RALLY SPEECH 2010

(ENGLISH TEXT OF SPEECH IN MALAY)

SUNDAY, 29 AUGUST 2010

AT THE UNIVERSITY CULTURAL CENTRE, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

1. Our economy has rebounded from the downturn last year. Businesses are thriving, companies are hiring more workers, and we can look forward to more overtime and higher bonuses.
2. The future looks bright, but we still have to work hard to continue prospering. The region offers many opportunities to Singapore companies and professionals. But we must also upgrade our domestic economy, to create better jobs for workers here. After all, most of our people will always be working here in Singapore.
3. Our strategy is to raise the productivity of our workers. Workers should upgrade their skills and acquire new ones. Low-skilled workers are under the most pressure. There are millions of workers in China and India. They are willing to accept very low wages - much less than us. If you want to earn more, you must train hard.
4. The Government will support workers with Continuing Education and Training (CET) programmes. WDA tells me that Malay workers have participated actively in CET programmes, especially during the downturn. Unfortunately, as jobs become plentiful, employers and workers pay less attention to CET. My advice is: Do not be complacent, sustain this effort. As the Malay proverb says: "Only by splitting the tree's bark, can one savour the sago within."
5. I know that some Singaporeans worry about competition from foreign workers here. However, while the foreign workers do compete against our workers, they also expand the pie for all of us. With foreign workers, we can

attract more investments here, and these projects will offer better jobs to Singaporeans.

6. Besides foreign workers, we also need immigrants who will become PRs and citizens, to top up our population. We are open to immigrants of all ethnic groups, so long as they can contribute to our economy and integrate well into our society.

7. It is not easy to attract Malay or pribumi talent from Southeast Asia, but we are getting some, and must keep on trying. However, let me reassure Singaporeans, especially the minority communities, that we will not allow immigration to upset the current mix of races among our population. The current mix is stable, and contributes to our racial and religious harmony.

8. We must work hard to integrate new arrivals into our society, so that over time they will become Singaporean in their outlook and identity. Both sides must make the effort. Singaporeans should welcome the new arrivals, and help them adapt to our culture and ethos. The new arrivals need to learn to get along with other people, especially those from different racial and religious groups. Here is a picture of Muslim immigrants from different bodies distributing food (bubur) to needy families during Ramadan. I am confident that over time the immigrants, and even more their children, will make this their home and nation.

9. Another priority for our future is education. The young have many different talents and interests – arts, music or sports, technical or academic subjects. We will upgrade our education system. We will create more pathways for students to follow, and more peaks for them to aim for. Every school will be a good school. Every school will have excellent facilities and ample resources. Every school will have dedicated, well-trained teachers. We will prepare our students to succeed in many fields in school, at work and in life.

10. Malay Singaporeans must take full advantage of this national programme. We have succeeded in reducing the dropout rates in schools to very low levels. Malay students are doing well at all levels. However, a segment of Malay students are still not performing to their full potential. I hope all students will make the effort to do well, and receive support from their families to study hard and improve their performance.

11. Besides education, our cultures and heritages are important for Singapore's future. I am glad that the Malay community is keeping its language and culture vibrant. I was told that the recent Malay Language Month was well supported by the community, including by students.

12. This year is the 10th anniversary of the Malay Language Elective Programme (MLEP) that has been running at two junior colleges. This picture shows MLEP students at Tampines JC performing *dikir barat* (Malay musical form) as part of their annual cultural production Manifestasi. The MLEP students also participated in a *pantun* (Malay poetry) recital at a radio station in Tanjung Pinang. They were at Bintan Island, Indonesia, for a Malay cultural immersion programme. I hope that with government support, you will take greater interest in your language and culture.

13. Our youth are achieving their dreams in many areas. Malay youths too are doing well, for example in IT, creative arts and sports. One Malay polytechnic student, Muhammad Ikhwan Zainal, was part of a team which developed an Xbox game. Among our athletes who won medals at the recent YOG were two Malay athletes – Nurul Shafinas Abdul Rahman in taekwondo and Abdul Dayyan Mohamed Jaffar in archery. Our football team that won the bronze medal was multiracial, and included several Malay players. I congratulate them all. Indeed, young Singaporeans today have the confidence to pursue their passions and make a difference to the world.

14. But with globalisation and the internet, our young are also exposed to negative influences and dangers. A small number are becoming self-

radicalised through the Internet, and being led astray to support jihadist terrorism. We have seen a few cases recently. Fortunately, we spotted them before they did any harm to themselves or others.

15. I am glad that Malay/Muslim Singaporeans have acknowledged this problem squarely. You have taken a clear stand against extremism and terrorism. Hence you have maintained strong trust and confidence with the other communities in Singapore. However, terrorist groups remain active in the world, and in our region. Extremists are using English to spread their message. Therefore, the problem has not been eradicated. Hence, we need to maintain our guard.

16. Families and friends can help to spot warning signs in youth. Muslims can use the Asatizah Recognition Scheme (ARS) to verify the credentials of religious teachers. Some ustazs have suggested strengthening the ARS to make it more effective. I hope the community will consider how this can be done.

17. This is a sensitive issue, but I feel that I have to raise it. My concern is with a small minority of vulnerable people. This should not distract us from other major issues – economy and jobs, education and training, and competitiveness and excellence; but nevertheless the issues of extremism and terrorism need your continued attention.

18. You have thrived under our system of meritocracy. You have become self-reliant, and proud of your achievements. You have contributed much towards our nation's progress. We have much work to do, to take Singapore another step up. I encourage the community, especially students and workers, to continue putting in effort to better your skills and lives. Then you can achieve the best for yourselves, the community and Singapore.

Thank you, and my best wishes for Muslims during the fasting month.