

## NATIONAL DAY RALLY SPEECH 2009, SUNDAY, 16 AUGUST 2009

Friends and fellow Singaporeans, this is a significant year for Singapore. It is the 50th anniversary of our self-government. It is also the year when we have been hit by the most serious recession in half a century. Day to day we watch keenly the economic numbers - growth data, unemployment data, trade data, all the statistics. It is like monitoring the temperature chart of an H1N1 patient.

But we need to step back and see things in the longer perspective. Over the last five decades we have met many challenges successfully. And when we started out, we had much less than we have today.

Singapore achieved self-government on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1959. That evening, Mr Lee Kuan Yew and his new PAP team held a huge rally on the Padang. And MM spoke. He told the crowd: "Once in a long while in the history of a people there comes a moment of great change. And tonight is such a moment in our lives."

It was quite a different mood from tonight's National Day Rally. It was a moment of great excitement. And it was also indeed the start of a long period of enormous change for Singapore. In the course of the next 50 years, we developed our economy, we created jobs for Singaporeans, we housed and educated our population, and we forged our different communities into one united people.

And therefore, we are quite confident that we will overcome this present economic challenge. We need to tackle the immediate situation. But we also must also look ahead to the longer term. And provided we can do both, our future is bright. How can we do this? Tonight, I will talk about four issues: the economy, healthcare, harmony in our society and shaping Singapore together. Let me start with the economy.

The global economic crisis has been a major challenge for us. The first hint of this was two national days ago when it was just one little black cloud on the horizon. And as we prepared the National Day messages, we inserted a warning, just to tell people, watch out, keep an eye open.

Last year we could see the storm approaching. So I spent some time in the rally explaining the risks. But as it turned out it was much, much worse than anybody had expected. Certainly much worse than we had expected. December, January, February, to see our GDP go down -10%, was something unimaginable.

Now the eye of the storm has passed. First half we did -6.5%. Less bad than we had feared although usually you would not have a minus sign down there. But now the global situation is stabilising, and including in the US, where the problems are the largest. So we are looking ahead cautiously towards the rest of the year.

Our labour situation has stabilised. Unemployment is not too high. Companies – some of them are hiring again, although still not in large numbers. Third quarter should be all right. Beyond that, the outlook is still not so clear. No signs of Christmas orders pouring in yet. And there are some companies which are still on short time, compulsory leave, shorter work week and so on.

So what has happened? Their output has gone down, their headcount has not gone down, so they are really carrying some surplus workers for the time being, helped by the SPUR programmes, with money to send them for training, and helped by the Government carrying the Jobs Credit cost for them. It is all right for the short term but it is not clear how long they can hold on to these extra workers because if the recovery is delayed, then sooner or later they will have to right-size, they will have to let go of some of these workers and there could be more job losses. So we have to be prepared. We will also see some job losses from restructuring. As companies move upstream, they will shed some old jobs. Old jobs keep on going to other countries with lower cost, maybe not quite so skilled but improving and we must

be moving upstream. So as they lose their old jobs we hope they will continue to upgrade their operations here, create new and good jobs to replace the ones lost.

For example, Seagate is closing their hard disk drive assembly factory by the end of next year. It was in the news a couple of weeks ago. Seagate is a very big employer, and has been a very big employer in Singapore for many years. They are closing their disk drive assembly factory, losing a couple of thousand workers but they will still employ 6,000 people here, in high-value work - hard-disk media manufacturing, R&D, international headquarters operations. So instead of making the disk drive - the box, you are making the media, the material on which the recording is made, the high-tech part of the box.

My overall assessment of the state of the economy is that the Resilience Package which we introduced in January is working, and no need for a new prescription now. Before the end of the year, we will review and we will decide what we need to do for next year.

Beyond this year, I expect the global recovery to be a subdued one. It will pick up but it will not pick up in a hurry. But even in that environment, it does not mean that we cannot grow because we are small; the world markets may not be expanding fast but we can grow by sharpening our skills, and enlarging our market share. And even now we can see good signs. You can call them green shoots if you like but good signs of what is happening because local companies are doing well, we have new business areas blossoming nicely, multinationals continuing to invest good quality projects here and workers re-skilling and upgrading in Singapore.

Let me give you some examples, just briefly. Local companies with strong capabilities are building, expanding, gaining a march on their competitors, like Hyflux. I recently met an engineer from Hyflux at a function. I asked, "How is the company doing?" He says it is doing very well, with many opportunities to build water facilities all over the world. I asked him, "Which is your most challenging project?" He thought a while, and he said, "Algeria". They are building the world's largest seawater desalination plant in Algeria, not in a big city but at a small village next to the Mediterranean Sea, in the middle of nowhere. That is a picture of the middle of nowhere. The nearest town is three hours' drive away on a bad road. So I said, "Can you get Singaporeans to go to these places to stay?" He said, "Yes, we have 22 Singaporeans there working, including two women". They have got spunk.

I said "What do they do? What happens after you finish working in a place like that? Where do you live?" He said, "Well, they live in dorms". So these big buildings must be the dorms and as for entertainment - no alcohol because it is an Islamic country, so they play basketball and computer games. And here they are *[picture and audio clip]*.

So with the Internet, we can still talk to them. I hope they are listening over webcast to the speech tonight. Because of this and other projects, Hyflux is doing well and still hiring engineers and it shows that there is still work to be done, provided we are prepared to rough it out and take the jobs which are available, which are good jobs.

We are also growing entirely new activities here, like interactive and digital media, IDM. What does it mean? Games, visual effects, animation. When you go to a movie and you see fireworks or you see explosions or you see a storm or even you see a beautiful actress, it may not be real. It may be the computer graphics engineer hard at work. And it may be a Singapore engineer hard at work. The leading players have established operations here, Electronic Arts. It is the world's largest game company. They make 'The Sims'. LucasFilms is here from the US and we have got European and Japanese companies too. And the pool of local talent is growing. All our polytechnics, and NUS, NTU, NAFA, LaSalle - they are all offering courses because the demand is there. The students want to do it and the students are doing quite interesting work. Nanyang Polytechnic final year students last year did a project - a PC racing game - F1 Marina Bay. That *[picture]* is one scene at Supreme Court, and I think they have another scene to show you, which is at the "Durian" *[picture]*.

So we are producing game programmers, visual effects artists, computer graphics artists, all in demand. It is still young, a green shoot, but it has produced some quite impressive work. LucasFilms made one production here from concept to completion. It is called 'Clone Wars: Jedi Alliance'. This is Yoda *[picture]*. If you know about Star Wars, you will know who he is. I think we will produce more of such movies and this should grow into another interesting segment of our economy.

We are also attracting MNCs to Singapore still. They are using this downtime to think deeply about their future. They are keen to do more in Singapore, in Asia, which they see as a key growth engine for the world and they see Singapore as a base for them to do their Asia business. So EDB has been engaging these companies in strategic dialogue, to encourage them to put their high-end manufacturing, their headquarters operations, their 'control tower' functions here to service the region. Control tower like Changi Airport's control tower, tracking what is happening all over Asia, logistics, money, manpower, research or production, the whole lot. And EDB is working out with them on 5 to 10-year plans.

For example Rolls Royce – they make jet engines, marine engines. They moved their marine division global headquarters to Singapore this year, not just an Asian headquarters but for that part of the business - their global headquarters, controlling things all over the world - is based in Singapore. And they are also building a facility here to test and assemble Trent aero engines and a plant to manufacture the fan blades.

This is the engine which they are making in Singapore *[picture]*. It is meant for their big wide-body jets, so if you are on an Airbus 380, you may have one of these. It is taller than the man and the fan blades, these massive things, are high-tech products which they are going to make here. We will have their first factory outside the UK to do it. And it is going to give us 500 mostly skilled jobs when fully operational, in Seletar Aviation Park.

So we are getting good projects, long term projects here and one key benefit and one key strength we have in attracting these projects, is the Singapore brand name. It benefits local companies when they go overseas because they say, you are from Singapore, I can depend on you. And it gives overseas companies confidence when they come here and invest here. So we should never compromise or lose this advantage.

It is not just a name but it depends on a united people, best workforce in the world, good leadership, first class government. When companies like Rolls Royce decide to site projects here and put a plant here, they spent years to study and decide. They are really betting on Singapore, not just for five or 10 years, but for the next 20 or 30 years. In other words, the next four, five or six elections. So take it seriously.

As we transform our economy workers will need to update and adapt themselves. The government is spending millions of dollars on programmes to help workers to do this, to upgrade within their jobs, and if they have lost jobs, to help them to become job-ready, to learn new skills, and to find new jobs.

The facilities are all there. The programmes are there. Please take advantage of these opportunities if you are out of a job, even if you are in a job. Do not wait till you are unemployed. It may mean effort, it may mean a mindset change. But we have programmes even to help people to make this mindset change, to overcome the psychological hurdles, to rebuild their self-confidence, improve their interview skills and to give one another, encouragement and moral support. I have a picture here and this is a programme, PMET career workshop, run by one of the CDCs. And I have watched the participants. It takes a while to overcome the shyness, the embarrassment, the awkwardness to let your hair down, to speak and to be prepared to take a new path. But it is worthwhile and it is productive.

Let me just quote you one example from Northwest CDC career centre. This was a person, Mr Mohd Amin, who was 48 years old and he was retrenched. And he went for help. And this is what he told us afterwards.

*"After the retrenchment, I feared I cannot find another job because of my age...all interviews I attended were unsuccessful for three months. I was very worried as I am sole breadwinner with three schooling children. The career centre coached me to learn a skill and start a new career path. I felt supported. I attended the job placement event and I successfully found a job as an Enforcement Specialist. The training allowed me to do my job confidently. I am doing well. I am so happy now as I am earning more than before."*

And finally the message:

*"I will ask my friends to go to career centre for support and help. Tell them to be flexible and not choosy."*

That is a real message. I think it is a convincing one. We should invest in this and do more. And we will enhance the training infrastructure to support continuous training and re-training which we will need to continue to do even after the recession.

We have currently almost 50 training centres scattered all across the island. They are in great demand. Many of them are bursting at the seams. So we will invest more and build two national Continuing Education and Training campuses. One will be the East Campus at Paya Lebar Central. The other one is the West Campus at Jurong Lake District. They are next to MRT stations, and convenient for workers. And they will become one-stop shops for training and retraining, and job matching. And I think we will be able to get even more workers helped and trained. The Ministry of Manpower will give you more details later on.

Because of the way we have responded comprehensively and decisively to this downturn, we can be confident of our future. It is a deep trough, but we are coping with it. It has taken quite long. It may take some time more. But eventually the global economy will turn around, and Asia will sustain its recovery. And by then, our new strategies, our new investments, our workers' upgrading would all have taken effect. And we will be ready to pick up strongly again.

We are preparing for our long-term future by strengthening our social safety nets. After food and shelter, I think good health is one of the most important basic requirements which human beings have. It is more important than money. Singaporeans know that we have good doctors, good hospitals. Their worry is whether they can afford it, especially in the future after they grow old and retire.

We have done many things to mitigate this worry. We have a 3M (MediSave, MediShield, MediFund) system designed precisely to keep healthcare affordable to all, even and especially, the lower income group. And we have steadily improved and upgraded and extended the 3M system so MediSave now covers long term outpatient treatment, MediShield now provides higher insurance payouts, MediFund – we have increased the amounts, it is giving more help to the needy to settle their outstanding hospital bills.

So as a result, MPs see fewer cases of residents unable to afford healthcare, and medical social workers report that the MediFund is adequate to cover hospital bills. We will continue to improve this and to widen the 3Ms progressively but we have to do it carefully because we want to keep the system working and there are pitfalls.

But I know that Singaporeans are still concerned. We see medical science advancing, we see new technologies, new drugs, new procedures. People can live longer, but it costs more. And those who are in their 50s looking after aged parents, they feel the burden and they wonder "what will happen to me when my turn comes?". They asked, "I am all right now, what about the future?" We need to gear up our healthcare systems to prepare for this ageing population and we are doing that.

So today I would like to explain the implications of our ageing population and how we are preparing our healthcare system to cope. What does it mean when we say our population will be older? It means there will be more demand on healthcare because older people are sick more often.

But this also means it is a different pattern of healthcare. Younger patients do not go to hospital so often. When they go to hospital it is an acute problem which can be treated within a few days and then they go home well. I remember I was admitted to hospital once as a teenager for an appendicitis operation and my doctor who was a wise old man said, "I am so happy to treat you because you are a young man, I treat you, you will go home well. When I treat my older patients, I see them, they get better, after a while they come back again and I have to treat them again. It is much more complicated."

But now we have many more older patients who are admitted more frequently with multiple complaints. After a few days in hospital their acute condition probably has stabilised, they no longer need intensive and complex treatment but they are still not well enough to go home. You may not need to have the heart monitor, you may not need to have the blood or oxygen monitor, you may not need to have the nurse look at you every two hours or the doctor look at you twice or three times a day but you are not quite ready to go home and you still need several weeks to recuperate and to get better before you can be discharged.

After they go home they may still need continuing medication for underlying long-term conditions. Maybe they have diabetes, maybe they have heart disease, they may need aspirin, they may need statins. There are so many things which you have to take not just when you are sick but for the rest of your life. And even when you are at home, you may get sick again and you may have to come back again.

So we have to respond to this by putting in more resources into our hospital system, building new hospitals. We got the Khoo Teck Puat Hospital coming up in Yishun, we have got Jurong General Hospital coming up in the west, and that is good. Well, the buildings are easy to do, but getting the people to man them, the doctors, nurses, specialists, physiotherapists, that takes more doing but we are in the process of doing that. It needs money. We are in the process of increasing the budget too. We need to improve our 3M system. We are doing that too.

All these are necessary but by itself, more money is not the full solution to the problem. Because we also have to get the whole system to be structured properly so that it will be adapted to cater to the ageing population. To structure it properly means we need step-down care. What is step-down care? I think Khaw Boon Wan has been talking about this for some time but let me explain it again because it is a vital idea and a crucial part of our solution. Step-down care means slow medicine: community hospitals, nursing homes, GPs doing more work, home care - people taking care of sick people at home. Organised properly all this can provide competent, appropriate care especially for the elderly patients. Step-down care today is provided mostly by VWOs. They do an excellent job but they will need government help to deal with more elderly patients.

And one key thing we must do with this step-down care is to link up our acute hospitals - Tan Tock Seng, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital and so on with community hospitals, so that you can have the best of both worlds. Patients are sick can go to the acute hospitals, where they get "fast medicine" - ICU, MRI, surgery, all the intensive intervention and high-tech medicine. Then after they get better, they go to the community hospitals - Ren Ci, St Andrew's Community Hospital where there are doctors and nurses who can look after the patients and you have physiotherapy and occupational therapy and rehab but they do not need the high-end medicine. The patients go there, they receive "slow medicine", they take some time, get well enough to go home. If in the "slow medicine" place, you need "fast medicine", you shift back to the acute hospital, and the doctor can see to you.

And that way you get appropriate care, you save money and we also free up beds in the acute hospitals for more cases which need to be admitted. This is all in principle but just to understand what it really meant, I decided to go and have a look for myself. So I went to visit the new Ren Ci Hospital which is

co-located with Tan Tock Seng. And in this picture you can see Ren Ci on the left and Tan Tock Seng in the background, on the right hand side and behind. Ren Ci has a new management and they are working with Tan Tock Seng to realise this new arrangement. Tan Tock Seng will guide the medical care of patients at Ren Ci. The two hospitals will be connected together soon with a bridge so you can just wheel the patients across, without need for an ambulance. Ren Ci will maintain its community outreach. It has got many volunteers and these volunteers do a very valuable job helping to keep patients active and happy. And here you see (in this picture) the volunteers helping the elderly lady to get her muscles control and built up again, practising fishing for something, and cheering her up.

So I think Tan Tock Seng - Ren Ci is a good model. Other acute hospitals should also tie up with community hospitals in the same way. Changi Hospital is already partnering St Andrew's Community Hospital in the east. We will build similar sister community hospitals to match Khoo Teck Puat Hospital in the north and to match Jurong General Hospital in the west. And this arrangement will draw on the strengths of both parties - government professional teams delivering high quality care and VWOs, good at pastoral care and community outreach.

But the community hospitals cannot be the end of the story because you cannot stay in the hospital forever, you must go home. You want to go home. And patients are best discharged home as soon as possible so that they can be with their families, so that they can be in familiar surroundings. They will be more comfortable, happier; much better and cheaper than leaving them in the hospital. I think families want this too but at the same time, families tell us they need some help and support at home. Very often they need caregivers and maids. And the caregivers and maids may need some professional training to look after the seniors. They could require nurses to visit them more frequently, check on the patient's condition and refer back to doctors in the hospital if necessary.

Nowadays nurses can do many things: the nurse comes, attaches the sensors, reads an ECG, emails back to the doctor, the doctor can make a reading and then adjust the prescription or if need be, call the patient back. Home Nursing Foundation is doing good work in this respect and I think they need to ramp up, as we need more of this. GPs need to do more things with patients at home, monitoring and supervising their care.

So we want people at home. We would like to help you to have your patients at home and we are working on upgrading home care. It is one of Ministry of Health's priorities. This is not sexy, glamorous medicine but this is how we can help Singaporeans look after their elderly, look after ourselves when we are elderly, look after our healthcare costs. We have to think about the whole system, provide the right treatment at the right place to patients with different needs. So I hope that doctors will give full support to this. I hope the step-down care providers and VWOs will also work together with this because they are crucial.

And we also need the patients' cooperation and support. Please do not insist on being in the high acute hospital, getting high-tech fast medicine. If the doctor advises you that you would be ok, go to the community hospital. It is more suitable, you get better and more appropriate treatment. We need everybody to cooperate so that we can deliver good, affordable healthcare and benefit all our patients. This is what the doctors and the hospitals can do.

But I think one important business in medicine, in healthcare is what we ourselves can do to stay healthy - by maintaining healthy lifestyles. I think you know what to do because every teacher tells children in school, and we tell you this all the time: eat more fruits and vegetables, exercise regularly, do not smoke, keep your weight down. It is easy to say but very hard to do. I was reading one doctor lamenting how difficult it is to persuade people to lose weight in America where they have a big problem. And she said, "I advise my patients to lose weight. Then my patients look at me. And I said: Yes, I know but please try".

So please try. It is a change in attitude. You need lifestyle changes. It requires discipline, perseverance. So lectures and speeches would not work, necessary but would not be enough. The best way is to harness social links and interests to help individuals to stick to their good habits. So we have community programmes which combine fitness with fun, with social activities, brisk walking clubs, I think Northwest CDC has got a very popular activity going. Or qigong groups, this *[picture]* is one group, and all races participate.

One innovative scheme which encapsulates neatly what we need to do is the Wellness programme which Lim Boon Heng has been promoting and piloting in Jurong as well as a few other constituencies, with three components: Medical check-ups, regular exercise and social networking. So it becomes fun. And here *[in this picture]* you see the seniors are the ones who are dancing, not the ones who are looking. I think they are enjoying themselves. I went to visit the one in Jurong, and what really struck me was that all the seniors were cheerful and enjoying themselves, happy. So we will progressively expand this to cover the whole island. And we will reach out to more seniors so that we will help them to stay well and stay healthy.

Before I leave healthcare, let me just talk briefly about H1N1 *[picture]*. That was at the beginning. It has been a big challenge for us these four months. I am very glad that Singaporeans have responded well to this unexpected virus. We were very worried when the news first broke in April of Swine Flu in Mexico. We knew it would reach us very soon but we knew very little else. How dangerous was it? How treatable was it? How badly would we be affected? So at the onset we reacted strongly. We raised our alert status to orange. We did temperature scanning at entry points *[picture]*, masks and gowns in hospitals and clinics, home quarantine for suspects. And many people home quarantined themselves after they came back from overseas. Very soon it became clear that H1N1 was different from SARS - more contagious, fortunately less deadly. So we stepped down, orange to yellow, but we kept up our efforts to block the virus, to delay community spread, to buy time so we would not be overwhelmed by a huge spike of cases overnight.

The whole of Government responded. The whole of the population responded. We had learnt our lessons from Sars. And we succeeded in delaying community spread, and slowing the impact on us. Perhaps we were lucky but I think what we did made a difference. I would like to thank everyone who was involved in this - the doctors and nurses, the hospital staff and GPs, those taking temperatures at the entry points, teachers and principals in our schools and kindergartens, health officials and so many more. You worked under a lot of stress, there must have been some worry, concern over what the dangers might have been, but you did not shirk from your responsibilities, you continued to perform under pressure. There was even one case where neurosurgery had to be carried out and the surgeon carried out the neurosurgery fully garbed up in PPE -Personal Protective Equipment: gown, N95 mask and did brain surgery. I think Singapore owes this team and all of them a debt of gratitude.

This is how our healthcare system should work, not just against flu but all the time and for our long-term well-being. We have a good healthcare system, universally available and affordable to all. It is the envy of many countries. The Americans spend five or six times as much as us, their outcomes are worse, the British spend maybe double or three times what we do, their outcomes also not as good, and when they analyse their systems, they tell their people: the closest model to what they want to be is what Singapore is, with the 3Ms. So we have a good system, we must improve it but do not upset it and discard it because we are doing right and good by our people.

We will be ready for an ageing population. Each of us will also play our part to stay healthy and well and that is the way for Singaporeans to enjoy not just long life but good health and active golden years. Critical to our long term success other than building the social safety nets like healthcare is maintaining our social cohesion and particularly looking after our racial and religious harmony. We have discussed potential fault lines in our society quite often, between the rich and the poor, between Singaporeans and new arrivals. You see letters in the newspapers all the time.

But the most visceral and dangerous fault line is race and religion. And people do not discuss that so much. So I asked myself why. And I think there are two possible reasons opposite to each other.

One is they may think we have no problem because we have been living peacefully and harmoniously for so long. But two, perhaps people know this is a very sensitive subject and they feel awkward to talk about it, to tread on sensitive ground, and they shy away from it. I think there is some truth in both explanations. Yes, we are in a good position but, yes, we are aware of the sensitivities.

Yet from time to time we have to discuss it, honestly but tactfully to assess the progress we have made, to recognise the trends in our society and the world around us and to remind ourselves to do better, and to tell ourselves where we need to do better. We have made a lot of progress over the last 40 years in building our harmony and cohesion. We have integrated our people. We have enabled all communities to move ahead. We have built a stronger sense of Singaporean identity and the religious groups have contributed a great deal to this progress.

The leaders of the groups have guided their flocks wisely. They have helped to set a wholesome and moral tone to our society. And they do a lot of good work, not just for their own flocks but for all groups. And they have respected and accommodated one another, made practical compromises so that all can live harmoniously together in a uniquely Singaporean way. I know it first-hand. I went to a Catholic school, it gave me a good education and now as an MP seeing cases, I know the good work which the church groups, the mosque groups, the temple groups do.

Recently, I saw a case. A man came to see me. He had a house problem. He said, "Please help me solve this problem. I have spent 23 years in jail, in and out. I have now turned over a new leaf. Please do not let me go back to where I was again." And he showed me his proudest possession, a certificate of completion of a Bible study course which had helped him to turn over a new leaf and know what is right and good. So I tried my best to help him. I am not sure whether the problem will finally be solved but here was one man whose life had been changed vastly for the better.

We may take our harmony for granted in Singapore but our visitors are astonished. Recently I met the Grand Mufti of Syria. He came here to deliver the Muis lecture and I spent some time with him. I learnt a lot from him. He told me that racial and religious diversity was a great treasure for a nation state. He was deeply impressed by how we had embraced diversity in Singapore. And he shared with me this parable.

He said, "Imagine a mother with four children, a Christian, a Buddhist, a Muslim, a Jew. Which child should the mother love most?" He said, "It is an impossible question. Of course the mother will love all of them equally because they are all her children, but she will most approve of the one who takes best care of his or her other three siblings."

So I replied to him, I said, "Thank you very much for your compliment but I did not feel that Singapore had completely arrived and we still have to be careful because racial and religious conflicts can still pull us apart."

Let me explain why this is so from a micro point of view and from a macro point of view. A couple of weeks ago, I saw a programme on TV, "Lonely Planet - Six Degrees" on Discovery channel. It was about Singapore and all the things you can do, food, entertainment and so on. And in one part of the programme, the presenter was going to watch a Malay band perform at a Malay wedding in a void deck. And the band leader was guiding the lady to the location.

On the way they saw some tentage put up. She said, "What is that? Is that the wedding?" The band leader, who was a Malay boy, said, "No, that is not the wedding. That is a Chinese funeral in the same void deck." And he explained that a void deck can be used for weddings, funerals, also to play soccer. I think that last part is not quite right but he said you cannot watch pornography and other things. He

added, "Malays, Chinese and Indians, we stay together in the same block, so when you have your cultural events, it all comes together." And that is what usually happens in Singapore.

But sometimes, things go wrong like the case which I described in my Chinese speech just now. Two families both wanted the same place. The Malay family wanted to hold a wedding, Chinese family wanted to hold a wake, then there is a tussle.

In the incident which I described, fortunately the Malay family graciously agreed to move nearby to a different void deck even though they had the first claim after mediation by the grassroots leaders. And the MP and the Town Council facilitated this. They waived charges and they put up posters to inform the wedding guests to go to the right place. And so everything ended amicably. But it could easily have been otherwise.

I cite this example not to criticize one group or another but to point out that such sensitive incidents are bound to arise from time to time in Singapore. They are very rare, maybe one incident in 300 funerals. How do I know? We collect statistics on everything. It is about one every 300 funerals. Usually it is handled uneventfully by the Town Councils, sometimes the Malay wedding moves, sometimes the Chinese funeral moves.

This case was unusual because both parties stood firm at the beginning. Fortunately after mediation, one side decided to give way. But if such an incident had been wrongly handled and you have a case which escalates into a racial or a religious conflict, then one case is bad enough.

To solve such problems, to live peacefully together, we need good sense and tolerance on all sides and a willingness to give and take because otherwise whatever the rules, there will be no end of possible causes of friction, noise, auctions, seventh moon, parking because of the mosque or because of the church, joss sticks because the stray ashes will blow somewhere, dog hair. I was briefing our MPs on this case and this background recently and one MP said they had a case. A resident emailed him; a Malay resident. The upstairs neighbour had dog hair dropping on their clothes and he was very angry.

I said I would be very angry too. I am not Malay but I would be upset too.

So cheek by jowl, there will be no end of episodes where we will rub against one another. And without tolerance and forbearance, we will have a problem. That is the micro point of view. You do not see it because we do not report a lot of it in the newspapers. We keep it quiet, we deal with it in a low key way. So you see the peaceful calm of Singapore harmoniously progressing. It is like a swan. You see it sailing across the water beautifully, gracefully, underneath paddling away furiously. That is what MPs are doing when you do not know what they are doing.

From a macro point of view at the same, if you look beyond Singapore and ask what our overall environment is like, I think that has some relevance to this question too. We see a global trend of rising religiosity all over the world. Groups have become organized and more active. Their followers have become more fervent in their faiths, stronger in their faiths. And it is true of all faiths and all over the world. Let me give you just a few examples which are relevant to us.

The United States is a strongly religious country. More than 90 per cent of Americans believe in God. By the surveys, more than 80 per cent consider religion important in their lives. And about 80 per cent are Christians. So it is a very strongly religious country and there is a wave of revival, with mega churches and tele-evangelism. They have enormous buildings where services are held and they have television channels. They have it all on the Internet. Their new media is much more advanced than my new media.

And US politics is strongly influenced by religion in the Republican and Democratic parties. With the Republicans, the Christian right is a powerful influence, setting the agenda, influencing who can be elected, what policies they pursue. The Democrats on the other side, they also need Christian support.

In the last presidential election, Barack Obama's middle name became an issue. His middle name is Hussein but he is not a Muslim. He is a Christian. And he spent a long time trying to explain to people that "I am not a Muslim, I am a Christian and please vote for me."

So religion and politics are supposed to be separated in America but in reality they are closely inter-tangled together. And there is a fierce struggle between the conservatives and the liberals in America over moral and cultural issues. They call them the Culture Wars. They argue over abortion, they argue over stem cell research, they argue over gay rights, gay marriages and so on. It is a fierce struggle with both sides striving to set the agenda, not just for their own followers but for the country.

With Muslims, there is an intense revival worldwide. It is also visible in Southeast Asia. There is a strong sense of *ummah* of the worldwide Muslim community, of all Muslims all around the world. You see it around us in Malaysia. In one generation - big change: rules on dress, on food, on alcohol, contact between men and women. Very strict rules prevail now which did not use to prevail a generation ago.

If you watch P Ramlee movies from the 1950s and 60s, the way they dress, the way they act, the way they perform, it was like an American sitcom but it was the society then - a different kind of Muslim society. Today you cannot imagine a P Ramlee movie being produced and shown over Malaysian television. It has become a conservative, more rigorously Islamic society among the Malays and Muslims. And Islam has become a major factor in Malaysian politics.

In Indonesia, there is a similar trend, not as advanced but similar. And the DPR, the parliament, is right now considering a law to require businesses to seek halal certification, not voluntary but compulsory. If you are doing business you must get a *halal* certification. Indonesia is based on Pancasila that means belief in one God regardless of which religion you belong to. And yet this is happening. In Indonesia, the society is changing.

They feel a sense of *ummah* too, of the global Muslim community. Recently there were the Xinjiang riots between the Uighurs and the Han Chinese. The Uighurs are Muslim, the Han Chinese are not Muslims, and the Indonesian Majelis Ulama Indonesia, or the Ulama Council, issued a statement in support of the Muslim Uighurs. It is not their struggle in Indonesia but they felt a sense of togetherness with the Muslims far away.

In South Korea, an East Asian country, was mostly Buddhists originally. But Christianity has become a major religion and the Christians have been successful in society. They have risen and they occupy important positions in business and in politics. The President is Christian. Mr Lee Myung-bak, he is a Presbyterian elder in his church. And some of his advisers are also Christian and the Buddhist community has raised concerns. Last year, thousands of Buddhist monks staged a protest against what they saw as Christians discriminating against Buddhists in Korea. The result was President Lee subsequently expressed regret that the Buddhists had been offended. The Buddhists have taken this positively, so there is some reconciliation and temperatures have come down.

These are things happening around us but Singapore is carried along by this global tide. On Fridays, mosques overflow, on Sundays, churches overflow, cinemas overflow, many halls over Singapore overflow with Christian services of all kinds. Buddhists too are active, reaching out to a younger, English speaking generation. And some have introduced music to spread their teachings. Hindus too are celebrating more religious festivals and events.

In itself, there is nothing wrong with people becoming more religious because religion is a positive force in human societies. It provides spiritual strength, guidance, solace, a sense of support for many people, especially in a fast changing and uncertain world. But at the same time, stronger religious fervour can have side-effects which have to be managed carefully, especially in a multiracial and multi-religious society. So what are these risks? Let me just highlight three of them.

Aggressive preaching or proselytisation. You push your own religion on others, and cause nuisance and offence. You have read in the papers recently, one couple who surreptitiously distributed Christian tracts which were offensive to other faiths, not just to non-Christians but even to Catholics because they said Catholics are not Christians. They were charged and sentenced to jail. But there are less extreme cases too which can cause problems.

For example, we hear from time to time complaints of groups trying to convert very ill patients in our hospitals who do not want to be converted and who do not want to have the private difficult moments in their lives intruded upon. But sometimes it happens. So aggressive preaching is one problem.

Intolerance is another problem. Not respecting the beliefs of others or not accommodating others who belong to different religions. You think of this as me versus somebody else, one group versus another group but sometimes it happens within the same family.

Sometimes, we have parents who have traditional religions, and children have converted away. Then when the parents die, and they had asked to be buried according to traditional rites, the children stay away from the funeral or the wake. It is very sad. From a traditional point of view, it is the ultimate unfilial act but it does happen occasionally. So intolerance, extremism, is another problem.

Exclusiveness is a third problem - segregating into separate exclusive circles, not integrating with other faiths. What does that mean? It means you mix with your own people. You do not mix with others. You end up as separate communities.

It could be a direct preference to stay among your own group, it could be indirectly or unintended but you prefer not to share meals with others or maybe you disapprove of yoga or taichi because you think there is something religious there. And instead of doing an activity jointly together, you end up with each group doing separate activities.

Yoga, for example, was an issue in Malaysia recently because there was a ruling that yoga was not *halal* and the Prime Minister then, Abdullah Badawi, had to come out and say yoga is okay as long as there is no chanting, or a religious component to it.

We foresaw these dangers 20 years ago. So we presented a white paper on maintenance of religious harmony in Parliament. We passed a bill, Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act in 1989-1990. Before we did that, the Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew and the key ministers met all the religious leaders. We had a closed door session at MCYS. We spoke candidly. We explained our concerns, why we wanted to move this Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act. The religious leaders spoke up candidly, and they gave us their support. We moved with their support. And we have continued to keep in close touch with them, to meet them regularly.

I do that personally - exchange views, discuss how to maintain harmony, keep the line warm and the confidence on both sides so I know you, you know me. If there is a problem, we are not dealing with strangers but with somebody we know and trust. And once or twice, I have had to meet them over specific difficult cases, not general discussion of religious harmony in Singapore but dealing with specific difficult issues. No publicity, but relying on mutual trust and the wisdom of our religious leaders to defuse tensions. And I am very grateful for their wisdom and for their support.

Because of this active work behind the scenes, we have not needed to invoke the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act for 20 years but it is something which is important to us which we must keep for a long time. We can never take our racial and religious harmony for granted. We will look after the issues but at the same time we must observe some basic principles to keep it the way it is. Let me tell you a few of these basic principles.

First, all groups have to exercise tolerance and restraint. Christians cannot expect this to be a Christian society, Muslims cannot expect this to be a Muslim society, ditto with the Buddhists, the Hindus and the other groups. Many faiths share this island. Each has different teachings, different practices. Rules which only apply to one group cannot become laws which are enforced on everyone. Muslims do not drink alcohol but alcohol is not banned. Ditto gambling which many religions disapprove of but gambling is not banned. If we have to live together in peace, then all have to adopt 'live and let live' as our principle.

Secondly, we have to keep religion separate from politics. Religion in Singapore cannot be the same as religion in America or religion in an Islamic country. Take Iran for example – an Islamic country, in fact, all Shi'ite. Recently, they had a presidential election which was fiercely contested and the outcome was disputed, between Ahmedinejad and Moussavi. Both sides invoked Islam in their support. Moussavi's supporters had a battle cry - Allahu Akhbar (God is Great). But Iran is Islamic, it is Shi'ite. So after the battles, they can come back as one society.

In Singapore, if one group invokes religion this way, other groups are bound to say I also need powerful support and will also push back invoking their faith. One side insists I am doing God's work. The other side says I am doing my God's work. And both sides say I cannot compromise. These are absolute imperatives. The result will be a clash between different religious groups which will tear us apart. We take this very seriously.

The PAP ourselves remind our candidates when we field them: Bring your friends and supporters, but do not bring all the friends from your own religious groups. Do not mobilize your church or your temple or your mosque to campaign for you. Bring a multiracial, multi-religious group of supporters. And when you are elected, represent the interests of all your constituents, not just your religious group in Parliament. Speak for all your constituents.

Thirdly, the government has to remain secular. The government authority comes from the people. The laws are passed by Parliament elected by the people. They do not come from a sacred book. The government has to be neutral, fair. We are not against religion. We uphold sound moral values. We hold the ring so that all groups can practise their faiths freely without colliding with one another in Singapore. And that is the way Singapore has to be.

You might ask: Does this mean that religious groups have no views and cannot have views on national issues? Or that religious individuals cannot participate in politics? Obviously not. Because religious groups are free to propagate their teachings on social and moral issues and they have done so on the IRs, on organ transplants, on 377A, homosexuality. And obviously many Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhist participate in politics.

In Parliament, we have people of all faiths and in Cabinet too. And when people who have a religion approach a national issue, they will often have views which are informed by their religious beliefs. It is natural because it is part of you, it is part of your individual, your personality. But you must accept that other groups may have different views, informed by different beliefs and you have to accept that and respect that. And the public debate cannot be on whose religion is right and whose religion is wrong. It has to be on secular rational considerations, public interests - what makes sense for Singapore.

The final requirement for us to live peacefully together is to maintain our common space that all Singaporeans share. It has to be neutral, secular. Because that is the only way all of us can feel at home in Singapore and at ease. And let me explain to you not based on arguments but specific examples to say what I mean. Sharing meals - we have different food requirements. Muslims need *halal* food, Hindus don't eat beef, Buddhist sometimes are vegetarian. So if we must serve everybody food which is *halal*, no beef and vegetarian, I think we will have a problem. We will never eat meals together. So there will be *halal* food on one side, vegetarian food for those who need it, no beef for those who do

not eat beef. Let us share a meal together, acknowledging that we are not the same. Do not discourage people from interacting. Do not make it difficult for us to be one people.

Our schools are another example where we have common space, and where all races and religions interact. In government schools, but even in mission schools. Even in church schools run by religious groups, there are clear rules which MOE has set so that students of all faiths will feel comfortable. You might ask: Why not allow mission schools to introduce prayers or Bible studies as compulsory parts of the school's activity or as part of school assembly. Why not?

Why not let those who are not Christian or do not want a Christian environment go to a government school or go to a Buddhist school? Well, the reason why not is because if we do that, then we will have Christians in Christian schools, Buddhists in Buddhist schools, Muslims in schools with only Muslim children and so on. And I think that that is not good for Singapore.

Therefore, we have rules to keep all our schools secular and the religious groups understand and accept this. Take for example SJI. It is a St Joseph's Catholics brother school, but it has many non-Catholic students including quite a number of Malay students who study there. And one year the Josephian of the year in 2003 was a Malay student, Salman Mohamed Khair. And he told Berita Harian that initially his family was somewhat worried about admitting him to a Catholic school and he himself was worried, afraid because he did not know what to expect but he still went because of SJI's good record. He said "Now, I feel fortunate to be in SJI. Although I was educated in a Catholic environment, religion never became an issue".

So indeed that is how it should work and I know it works because I understand that Malay students in SJI often attend Friday prayers at Ba'alwi Mosque nearby, still wearing their school uniforms. And SJI thinks it is fine, the mosque thinks it is fine, the students think it is fine and I think it is fine too. That is the way it should be.

Another example of common space is in the workplace. The office environment should be one which all groups feel comfortable with. Staff have to be confident that they will get equal treatment even if they belong to a different faith from their managers, especially so of course in government departments but also in private sector. And I think it can be done because I think even religious community service organizations often have people who do not belong to that religion working comfortably and happily in that organization. And this is one very important aspect of our meritocratic society.

Whatever other countries may do, this is what we have to do in Singapore. Maintain these principles: tolerance, keep religion separate from politics, keep a secular government, maintain our common space. The basis for this is practical reality in our society. It is not any abstract political theory. It is not any divine revelation. This is the only way all groups in Singapore can live in peace and harmony in Singapore.

So this is the background to the way the government looked at one recent issue, which I am sure you are waiting for me to talk about, which is Aware. We were not concerned who would control Aware because it is just one of so many NGOs in Singapore. On homosexuality policy or sexuality education in schools, there can be strong differences in view but the government's position was quite clear. It was not at stake. But what worried us was that this was an attempt by a religiously motivated group who shared a strong religious fervour to enter civil space, take over an NGO it disapproved of and impose its agenda. And it was bound to provoke a push back from groups who held the opposite view which happened vociferously and stridently as a fierce battle.

The media coverage got caught up and I think the amplifier was turned up a bit high. People talk about mature civil society. This was hardly the way to conduct a mature discussion of a sensitive matter where

views are deeply divided. But most critically of all, this risked a broader spill-over into relations between different religions.

I know many Singaporeans were worried about this, including many Christians. They may not have spoken out aloud but they raised one eyebrow and they kept their thoughts to themselves. Therefore, I am very grateful for the very responsible stand which was taken by the church leaders, the statement by the National Council of Churches of Singapore that it did not support churches getting involved and also the statement by the Catholic Archbishop, because had these statements not been made, we would have had a very serious problem.

The government stayed out of this but after it was over, after the dust had settled, I spoke to the religious leaders, first the Christians and then the religious leaders of all faiths including the Christians again so that everybody understood where we stood and what our concerns were, so that we can continue to work together to strengthen our racial and religious harmony.

This is an unusually serious and heavy subject for National Day Rally. Normally, you talk about babies, *hongbaos*, bonuses. No bonuses tonight, but a bonus lecture on a serious subject.

We discussed it in Cabinet at length and decided that I should talk about this. I crafted the points carefully, circulated them many times. Different presentations in Chinese, Malay, English because different groups have different concerns. But a consistent message so that there is no misunderstanding. And I also invited the religious leaders to come and spend the evening with us tonight and listen to the speech as well. It has a serious purpose, which I can explain face to face, so that you can help us to help your flocks to understand our limitations, to guide them to practise their faiths, taking into account the context of our society.

Please teach them accommodation which is what all faiths teach. And I look forward to all the religious groups continuing to do a lot of good work for Singapore for many years to come.

Finally on religion, let me share with you one story, a true story which was in an Indian newspaper recently, the Asian Age. It was picked up in the Straits Times. This was about a young from Gujarat, a Muslim who migrated to Singapore after Hindu-Muslim riots in Gujarat in 2002.

You may remember that there were very bad Hindu-Muslim riots. A train carrying Hindu pilgrims was stopped in Ahmedabad, and was set on fire. Circumstances were unclear, but 50 odd men, women and children burnt to death trapped in the trains. The Hindus rioted. They had no doubt what the cause was. And 1000 people died, mostly Muslims, because Ahmedabad has a large Muslim community.

This person was a Muslim who experienced that riot. And he decided to come to Singapore after the riot. We call him Mohamad Sheikh, it is not his real name because he still has families there. And he said, this is what happened:

“During the bloody riots, he watched three of his family members, including his father, getting butchered. His family had to pay for being Muslim. Besides losing his family and home, Mohamad lost confidence and faith in the civil society. He did not want to spend the rest of his life cursing his destiny. He wanted to move on.”

So seven years ago, Mohamad came to Singapore and got a diploma in hospitality management. Now, he is working at an eatery and he hopes to open his own business one day. He told his interviewer had he stayed in Gujarat, “I would have been hating all Hindus and baying for their blood, perhaps”. Now, “he loves it when his children bring home Hindu friends and share snacks”. And he told the interviewer proudly, “my children have Christian, Buddhist, Hindu friends.” And he even hopes to bring his mother to

Singapore so that she can see for herself that “people of different races, different faiths can be friends and can co-exist peacefully.”

The interviewer asked him what Muslim sect he belongs to, which mosques he went to in India. He said, “I do not want to get into all that. Now, I am just a Singaporean and I am proud of it.”

This story reminds us that while we must not neglect to strengthen our harmonious society, we are in a good position. It is a Garden of Eden state. It is one where we are happy, where things are working and where if you leave the Garden of Eden, you cannot get back in again. So please stay there.

The Grand Mufti of Syria as well as many overseas visitors and diplomats have made the same point to us. It is what most impressed them when they watch our National Day Parade and National Day celebrations in the constituencies: Not the shows and the demonstrations and so on - they can see grander shows elsewhere - but the fact that in Singapore we live peacefully together, harmoniously.

And one of them said to me, you can have a minority Muslim representing a constituency of majority non-Muslim. Unimaginable in a country he came from. And he was a European. So let us rejoice in our harmony but let us never forget what being a Singaporean means. It is not just tolerating other groups but opening our hearts to all our fellow citizens.

If we stay cohesive, then we can overcome our economic challenges and continue to grow. We can strengthen our society safety nets. We can shape Singapore together. And this is how we have transformed Singapore over the last half century - solving problems together, growing together, improving our lives.

Words fail when you want to describe such an enormous change. So it is best to see the changes through pictures. I have gathered some - assembled from the archives, from the media who were very generous and from the Ministries and agencies. I also got a few from MediaCorp which ran a “Then and Now” contest, which lots of Singaporeans participated and gave some very nice pictures and stories which I hope to share with you. Let us see what has happened to Singapore over the last five decades.

We will start where it all began, with the Singapore River. This is *[a picture of]* what it looked like - lots of dirt. I am afraid I cannot bring the smell with me to show you. But my mother's office used to be near the Singapore River at Malacca Street. The street is still there. She used to have a blind telephone operator who came to work by bus every day. And the telephone operator told her that he always knew when to get off the bus because he could smell the Singapore River!

There were coolies on the Singapore River slogging away, carrying heavy loads, rubber, copra, rice from the tongkangs to the godowns and back, slogging for a better life for themselves, at the same time the basis of prosperity for Singapore's entrepot *[picture]*.

Today this is all gone. The river has become transformed. The skyline has changed. No more tongkangs. We have got electric boats on the water *[picture]*. Boat Quay has no more coolies. You go there to enjoy yourself and have a drink, vibrantly. This *[picture must be taken]* early in the evening because everybody still looks sober! Coolies are also gone, but just to remind ourselves of where we came from, I suggested to STB and they built some bronze sculptures of the people who used to work there, so we can remember them *[picture]*.

Housing has completely changed. Singaporeans used to live in terrible living conditions. This *[picture shows]* Chinatown in the 1970s. People were desperately poor and families often squeezed into miserable little cubicles. This is not a double-decker bed. This is one cubicle below and another cubicle above, another family.

Mr Lim Kim San used to tell a story of how he went to visit these cubicles because he was chairman of HDB and he wanted to understand what the conditions were like. And he met a man living in one of these cubicles in Chinatown and he was seated in a bed covered with a blanket. And he said to the man, "Is something the matter with you? Are you sick? It's so hot, why are you covered with a blanket?" And the man says, "No, I'm not sick, I'm doing this out of respect for you because my friend and I share one pair of trousers and he has gone to work wearing the trousers."

So the PAP was quite determined to move people out of slums and to build public housing for all Singaporeans and one of the first projects it built was Tanjong Pagar Duxton Plain at Cantonment Road, to show the voters in Tanjong Pagar and in Singapore what the PAP government could do. And these buildings were coming up in 1963 during the elections, *[this is a picture of]* the opening in 1964 and you see pictures of MM visiting the houses such as MPs do now.

They were very pleased with those little flats. But it showed people what we could do and it helped to win Tanjong Pagar and the 1962 general election, without which Singapore's history might have become different. Duxton Plain today has changed again. These blocks of flats have gone. Today we have the Pinnacle. This is a photograph, not a computer visualisation. The building will be ready by the end of the year, the tallest and I think the most valuable HDB flats in Singapore.

We went ahead to build entire new towns and among the earliest of our new towns was Toa Payoh. Originally just market gardens, some squatters, some villages, we cleared the vegetable farms and the kampongs and we put up a modern town taking shape, high-rise living, and we moved people into the high-rise flats *[picture]*.

And they brought with them their kampong spirit *[picture]*. So if you went to the flats, their doors were open, neighbours knew one another, they shared food, they chit-chatted, sometimes extended families on several floors in the same building. And here you see them friends with one another which this is good, but sometimes they also brought their kampong chickens upstairs.

HDB and the MPs worked hard to improve the estates, to raise the standards of social behaviour. We are still trying but we have made progress and with continuous upgrading, Toa Payoh now has a vibrant town centre with Toa Payoh Central *[picture]* and with MUP, SERS, IUP and all the other initials, the new housing blocks look quite good too *[picture]*.

So we have transformed Singapore physically. As the economy prospered our lives have improved. For the residents of the HDB flats, what is most important is not just what is outside the flat but what is inside their flat and the kitchen is the closest to people's heart.

So I have a very interesting pair of pictures sent in by Mr Ivan Kang to "Then and Now". And he used to live in a kampong house in Jalan Sembawang Kechil. And here you can see him trying to light a fire in the traditional way. I think it must be a charcoal or wood fire and he has taken a new picture of his current HDB flat in Yishun. He looks as trim as ever.

Toilets tell an even more dramatic story. Used to be like this *[picture]*. This is "Then and Now". This is what is called a *jamban*. And the lady lived in a place like this till 1985. Fifty metres to the house, and inside that there is a tiny space, a hole in the ground and a bucket. Minister Yaacob tells me the last bucket in Singapore is now in a museum in MEWR. To bath, the families would just use an open area. So you see a little girl in the picture and she is standing in a pail and this is what the Cantonese used to call *pei dan gong*. If you are old enough that means "century egg jar" which is what it was, came from China and we used to use this to bath. I used to use this too. Now, contrast this with a standard issue HDB toilet today, the toddler is not included *[picture]*.

To build a nation we not only house the people but also strengthen the ties with one another. So we built community centres all over Singapore. The early ones were very basic, just a simple building, zinc roof and inside you have a ping pong table, a community hall, maybe you can play carom or checkers [picture]. The star attraction was the black and white TV set with benches outside. Whole families and whole kampong gathered because people did not have TV sets. They came to watch. You do not need a lot of TV sets because at first there was only one channel, so we can all share the same channel [picture].

Now, today's Community Centres (CC), sometimes you see them, you do not know what they are. I will not ask you but this is Marine Parade CC and if you go inside the CC, you can see people doing line dancing and wine tasting. [In these pictures] there is the wine there and line dancing there and many other exciting things. It is quite different.

Our mosques have changed. Once upon a time, we had *suraus* - simple, primitive structure. A *sura* is a little prayer house. This picture was provided by Muis. Muis told me this was at Jalan Angkap. I asked where is Jalan Angkap? Muis said they did not know. So I checked up. Jalan Angkap is where there was once a gang fight and we think that it is somewhere in Kranji, but I think it is gone now.

Today with the Mosque Building Fund (MBF) we have new modern mosques and the most pretty one, I think, is the one I visited recently - the Singapore Islamic Hub and the Muhajirin Mosque, newly rebuilt. This is [a picture of] the Muhajirin Mosque. This is Muis and behind that, there is Madrasah Irsyad., greatly admired by overseas visitors. Not just as places for prayers but also social centres for the community. So many things happened. This was Al-Iman Mosque at Bukit Panjang. I visited them last year. They had a *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* event, Blessings to All Day, so children dancing, they were doing blood pressure tests, doing blood donations and so on. A vibrant centre.

We have created opportunities for our people. In the past, young people had to find their own ways to amuse themselves. So when it flooded, there was a chance to take a swim. This is "Then and Now" and the picture was sent in by Ruhaya who is the girl on the right-hand side. Today our young people still swim but now they train in covered pools and they excel and win medals. This is [a photo taken at] the Asian Youth Games this year, we hope for a similar photograph at YOG next year. Please take note, national teams. And I hope many more young people will volunteer to become YOG volunteers next year and show the world what Singaporeans can do.

Our youth are already volunteering, fulfilling their ideals, venturing out, helping people all round the region. Here [in this picture] you see them in Chiang Rai in northern Thailand building a community hall. They are on the YEP, the Youth Expeditionary Programme.

So Singapore has changed. And what has enabled us to make this change and kept us safe and sound all these years is the SAF. We have prospered in peace, we have managed to maintain confidence in Singapore and we have deterred any potential aggressors. In the old days, we had the SAF but we depended on the soldiers and what they carry. And the firepower you could carry was a rifle. If you wanted more, you had the machine gun, if you wanted more, the biggest thing you could carry was the 120mm mortar. I used to be in the Artillery so I chose this picture.

Today, we have the 3G SAF and if you see the soldier, which you should not because he is wearing new camouflage uniform, he is just one soldier. Advanced Combat Man System and he is linked up and he should be able to call upon the firepower of the whole of the SAF. He should have a UAV somewhere to see what is happening. He should be able to have an F15 on call, if not enough, Apache helicopters. Not enough? You have a stealth frigate. Not easy to see because stealth. If still not enough then we will bring our big guns, the Leopard tanks [graphics].

And it is not just words. It is a network system all connected together, all integrated able to fight as one tri-service combined armed force. We have invested in the hardware. But the key is in the man or woman - his training, his courage, his commitment. The regulars and the NSmen have served the nation well and we are particularly grateful for the services of generations of NSmen who have sacrificed and endured considerable hardships and inconveniences for the country. From time to time we have a committee to recognise the contributions of Operationally Ready National Servicemen to Total Defence (RECORD). Very long name but it is the Record committee. And the Record committee has convened every few years and they have had good ideas on how we can recognise and reward NSmen.

For example, they have recommended us to build SAFRA clubhouses. And we have built a number. The most recent one is at Mt Faber. I chose this picture because behind every NSman there is a wife and children, and they carry maybe more half the burden of the NSman service. More than just ironing the uniform but also providing him moral support and encouragement to do his duty. RECORD V, chaired by Professor Koo Tsai Kee, has been meeting this year. The committee is completing its work finalising its recommendations. It should have some good news to announce soon. So we should look forward to the announcement within a couple of weeks.

We are continuing to renew our city, to build our future Singapore. Even in the middle of this recession we are working hard at it. And again it is not just the hardware but also the opportunities, the institutions, the heart-ware, the memories which we are creating, which is what makes Singapore tick.

Let me give you an update on what is happening right now. We are delivering a first-class education system. We have made heavy investments in education at all levels, building new schools, equipping them with computers, labs and so on.

I will just show you 2 things which schools today which we never imagined. Media Production studios - so that even primary school children can make movies and productions and DVDs *[picture]*. Indoor sports halls - big enough, roomy enough to play all kinds of activities. Hence *[in this picture]* you see all the different coloured markings on the ground because all games possible. Beyond the schools we are investing in our ITEs and polytechnics to provide a first class post-secondary education. This is ITE College East *[picture]*. It looks like a university. It is as good as a university in many other countries in the world. Republic Polytechnic in Woodlands, set in beautiful gracious grounds. Here they are doing some adventure training *[picture]*.

But even beyond schools we want Singaporeans to seek out and absorb knowledge because you must keep on learning and relearning. Therefore we are building modern libraries in our new towns. You may not have seen this one but this is in Bishan. And this is also a photograph, because it looks so perfect but inside there are people and we can see them in a good environment. Somebody is browsing WiFi presumably, reading, chatting, finding a good spot to absorb information to keep up to date with the world, and maybe to chat with their boyfriends and girlfriends.

We are making a Singapore which is clean, efficient, reliable, safe. A train system which is clean, efficient, reliable, safe. If you go on MRTs in Singapore you can sit on any chair, no chewing gum. And it is safe, it is on time. We have opened 5 Circle Line stations. This is *[a picture of]* Serangoon station, just opened in May. But we are building a lot more because the Circle Line will be completed within the next couple of years.

These are the existing lines. We are going to have many more within the next few years and by 2020 we will have even more - Tuas Extension, Thomson Line, Eastern Region Line, North-South Line Extension - doubling the network which we have in Singapore *[graphics]*. But you do not have to be underground all the time.

We need fresh air, green spaces, parks and gardens all over the island and that is what MEWR and NParks is doing. We have Park Connectors or this one at Telok Blangah along the southern ridges *[picture]*. The parks will be green, the waters will be blue. ABC Waters (Active, Beautiful and Clean). This is *[a picture of]* Kallang River which used to be the same standard as the Singapore River but now it is clean with the banks landscaped and beautiful. I know this because I walked there. The last time I was on leave I walked all along from Bishan down to Kallang and it does look like this. But the water itself, I think the public still needs to be a little bit cleaner. Do not drop so much rubbish in.

The city centre is becoming vibrant. I will show you one of the buildings *[picture]*. This is a real building. It is Orchard Central, colourful but the attraction is the road and the activities and the life along the street - buskers playing, people seeing and be seen, seen and being seen, all times of day and night *[picture]*. The centrepiece of our city is a new Marina Bay *[picture]*. Last time I told you about it, it was a gleam in our artist's imaginations and impressions. Now we can see a new skyline taking shape. This is the existing buildings but if you go around the Bay, the Sail is here, NTUC Building is here with a "U", the banking and financial centre is taking shape and if you turn round a bit more, this is what you would have seen - the IRs - already reaching the top and getting joined up *[graphics]*.

I will show you how the Bay will look soon but rather than showing you more photographs, let me take you on a sail by and fly around starting on the Singapore River *[graphics]*. Here we are going down the Singapore River, under Anderson Bridge and the Esplanade Bridge into the Bay. So you can see the IR and all round. And you fly out, the Grandstand, the floating platform, Singapore Flyer, coming out to the Marina Barrage down here. And next to that you have the Gardens by the Bay including the cool houses which will be interesting features. Trees, you see the instant trees have all arrived. And up to the top of the IRs where they have the Sky Park with a splendour view, I am getting dizzy looking at this. That is Art Science Museum and this is the Double Helix Bridge which you could have seen from the parade the other day. Along the bridge and you can take a view.

The IRs, you do not have to go in to gamble, you can enjoy yourself outside on the Event Plaza. They will have misters to keep you cool, fountains to amuse you, fountains there. And you go across the Bay and we will have here between the Business Financial Centre (BFC) and The Sail is a green lung with a promontory where you can have a party.

And some of these things are built. One-on-the-Bund is already in Clifford Pier, this is a floating restaurant, this is One Fullerton, the Merlion is still there, the Durian and you come back to the Promenade and you enjoy the sunset. (The graphics are) courtesy of URA.

From the Singapore River to Marina Bay, we have totally transformed Singapore over the last half century. 1959 was a moment of great change but nobody at the Padang in June 1959 imagined the change to today's Singapore *[picture]*. It was not possible. We will continue to improve our lives, provided we work together and remain a harmonious and a cohesive society so that in another 50 years, we will have built another Singapore which is equally unimaginable today. The key is to stay united through rain or shine.

We just celebrated a special National Day *[picture]*, not just at the floating platform but all over Singapore and in many other places too. And even on the Web where 100,000 Singaporeans left birthday wishes for the nation. There were many memorable moments.

Take the first National Education show last month. They projected a clip of me recounting at several rallies ago how it had rained on the 1968 parade but the participants marched on and we showed the world. They were tempting fate because as soon as they finished showing that clip, it rained on them. Poured, but even the rain could not dampen their spirit and the young participants stayed through the show, braved the storm together and said the Pledge, sopping wet *[picture]*.

The show on 9th August was impressive, but what was most impressive is not just the performance but what it takes to put on such a show and what the show says about the sort of nation we are. The imagination and creativity which had to go into conceiving the show, the ability to organise, to execute, to make it happen.

Many national servicemen spent a lot of time packing these bags and volunteers too *[picture]* and organising everything so you went there, everything was exactly what it was meant to be. The commitment to excellence in all that we do and the spirit of one people celebrating our nationhood together. All this was epitomised in the Pledge moment.

Singaporeans from all walks of life, all over the island, and overseas too, said the Pledge together at 8.22 pm *[picture]*. All united, one voice, saying what it means to be a Singaporean and as one united people, we can continue to upgrade and build this city and make this place our home, our future and our Singapore *[picture]*.

Good night.