

Speech by DPM Teo Chee Hean, at the Pasir Ris-Punggol Citizenship Ceremony

Good Morning

Parliamentary Colleagues, Grassroots Leaders, Fellow Singaporeans, Ladies and gentlemen

Today, we welcome new citizens living in Pasir Ris-Punggol to our Singapore family, as you receive your formal recognition as a Singapore citizen. This year is significant in our history, as we mark the 50th anniversary of our independence. We are also proud and honoured to have hosted the 28th South East Asian Games, which just ended on Tuesday.

Sadly, this year has also been marked by sorrow. Our founding Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew passed away on 23 March. On 5 June, we lost seven students and two teachers from Tanjong Katong Primary School, and their adventure guide, who were climbing Mount Kinabalu when an earthquake struck Sabah.

Why do I mention these incidents in the same breath? Because they remind us about the attributes that define Singapore and Singaporeans, and bring out the values that we all hold dear.

As Singaporeans mourned the passing of Mr Lee, it was also a time for all of us to appreciate his life's work, and the foundations upon which he built the Singapore that he has left for us. Mr Lee and his multi-racial Cabinet team built Singapore on the foundation of multi-racialism, and worked hard to promote inter-communal harmony. He believed strongly in meritocracy, so anyone who was prepared to work hard could do well in life, regardless of race, family background, or connections. He emphasised the principle of self-reliance, but he cared deeply about people and would pay special attention to help the vulnerable and those in need. He wanted every Singaporean to have a stake in this nation, through home ownership and National Service. He always saw Singapore as a society open to the world, drawing in foreign investments to create good jobs, new ideas to spur innovation, and people who share our values.

These are some of the qualities that have underpinned Singapore's success. More importantly, these are qualities that Singaporeans of every generation strive for. Our young climbers at Mount Kinabalu, were from different backgrounds, races and religions. But they were united in their endeavour as they courageously strived to reach greater heights – they were reaching for the sky, and helping one another along so that all could do even better as a group. The teachers and guides selflessly protected their wards, even at the risk of personal safety.

At the SEA Games, we welcomed our friends from the region warmly. Our Team Singapore athletes gave their best – we surpassed our 1993 record of 50 gold medals, by winning 84 gold medals, second only to Thailand. Our athletes won 259 medals in total, the highest number among all participating countries this year. More importantly, they were humble in victory and gracious in defeat. Singaporeans turned up in droves to support Team Singapore, but also cheered on our friends from other Southeast Asian countries.

Through these episodes, we stood together as one people. Not only in joy and celebration, but also in sorrow and mourning. Not only in good times, but also in tough times. Through shared experiences like these, we strengthen our national spirit, reminding ourselves of what makes us Singapore and Singaporean.

These are also the qualities that have drawn you to Singapore, and why you have decided to

make Singapore the place where you sink roots and call home.

Many of you have already spent several years in Singapore, with family members or working here. By choosing to take up Singapore citizenship, you have demonstrated your commitment to Singapore. All of us now share a common future. We welcome you and look forward to your contributions to our community and our country. Help us to build a cohesive, harmonious and caring society, where all Singaporeans can share in the fruits of our growth. Let us stand united as one people, confident that we can face the future together. Let us work together to carry on Mr Lee's legacy, and build a better home and a bright future in Singapore for ourselves and our children. Thank you.