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**SPEECH FOR THE SWEARING-IN CEREMONY OF THE PRIME  
MINISTER, MR GOH CHOK TONG, AND HIS CABINET IN THE  
CITY HALL CHAMBER ON WEDNESDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 1990, AT  
8.00PM**

**TO SERVE, TO KEEP SINGAPORE THRIVING AND GROWING**

When in 1976 the late Mr Hon Sui Sen asked me to stand for election as a Member of Parliament, I could not say "no". I felt that I should serve. I had benefited from the system and from good government. I wanted to play my part to uphold values dear to me: justice and morality, discipline and order, honesty and sincerity, thoughtfulness and compassion. I felt I should contribute to the well-being of my fellow Singaporeans. I did not realise then that one day I would be entrusted with the responsibilities of Prime Minister.

I am grateful to Mr Lee Kuan Yew and the Old Guard leaders for their encouragement and advice; to my Cabinet colleagues and Members of Parliament

for having confidence in me, and choosing me to lead them; to Singaporeans for supporting me and my team over the years, as we prepared ourselves for the leadership change-over.

My mission is clear: to ensure that Singapore thrives and grows after Mr Lee Kuan Yew; to find a new group of men and women to help me carry on where he and his colleagues left off; and to build a nation of character and grace where people live lives of dignity and fulfilment, and care for one another.

I will do this by building on what Mr Lee and the Old Guards have achieved. I have been part of Mr Lee's team for the last 13 years. My stress is on continuity, not a break with the past.

The torch has passed from one generation of runners to the next. But the race continues. I will use the collective talents of my colleagues, and the combined energies of all citizens, to help the Singapore team stay ahead.

My colleagues and I have for some time been studying new ideas to build Singapore into a nation of distinction. We are putting together the most promising of these proposals into a long term plan for Singapore. Our report will

be ready within a few months. It will show clearly how much we can achieve together, given the will and the imagination.

I shall emphasize economic growth. To improve our homes, schools, and hospitals, to invest in our people and to transform our lives, we must create more wealth. Then we must share it fairly and widely among Singaporeans. That means Singaporeans must work hard, acquire new skills, and become ever more productive and competitive. In short, what we have been doing all these years.

I shall emphasize values and culture. A country cannot be a piece of driftwood, carried along by the wind and tide. Like a majestic tree, it needs to be firmly anchored by deep roots: a unique set of values to help it grow and thrive, and to distinguish it from other countries.

To enhance our identity and cultural values, we must teach our mother tongue better in schools, so that our children will learn to love the language, and not be put off by it. We need to use our mother tongue more, especially to impart values, so that we will remain Asian, and not become over-Westernised and deculturalised.

Our children should retain time-tested values, even as they pick up new ideas. They should respect their elders and put the community before themselves. Singaporeans should look after one another, and live in harmony amongst themselves. Every Singaporean, whatever his race, language or religion, should feel: "Singapore is my home. I have a place here. This is where I belong. This is where I will live and die."

I shall invest heavily in our people, especially in the next generation. We will do more to train workers. We will upgrade our schools and vocational institutes – all of them, not just a few.

We will introduce new programmes to equalise opportunities, like the plan to upgrade older HDB flats. These are programmes to enhance our assets, not to fritter away our wealth. We are working on an education savings scheme, to give children from poorer homes a better start in life. The scheme will give every schoolboy and schoolgirl access to programmes like music, arts and gymnastics which all parents want their children to have. By equalising opportunities for each generation, we preserve social harmony.

I am optimistic about our future, but wary of the risks which may lie ahead. Internally, the population is united and the country strong, poised for the

challenges of the next century. Internationally, it looks like a better world, promising many opportunities. Dangerous tensions have eased. Communism has been debunked. Cooperation is replacing conflict. Peaceful competition for influence, investments and markets will continue. This is much better than military confrontation, arms races, and threats of war. ASEAN should continue to prosper. ASEAN cooperation, and especially the Growth Triangle with Indonesia and Malaysia, will strengthen our economic growth.

But it is still an uncertain world. Familiar signposts have disappeared, and a new order has not yet been established. The outcome of the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait may cause further earthquakes. The US has led the build-up of a powerful international force in Saudi Arabia. If Iraq defies UN resolutions and does not withdraw, there are two possibilities. One, the UN and US hack down and accept Iraq's annexation of Kuwait. That will mean the end of UN and US global influence, and trouble for countries which depend on international law and order for their security and prosperity.

But President Bush has vowed not to allow Iraq to remain in Kuwait. So the United States of America has to stand its ground. If Iraq also stands firm, as it has repeatedly declared it will, war must break out. Then oil fields may be set ablaze, and oil prices will shoot up. The US economy will plunge into a recession. International trade and investments will dip. Singapore depends heavily on both. We will be hit hard. We will then have to take tough, even unpleasant measures. Our dreams of becoming a developed country will have to be postponed by several years. As we plan for a better life, we must also brace ourselves for hard times.

Mr Lee Kuan Yew has done much for Singapore. No tribute however eloquent can adequately describe his contributions, or our deep gratitude. He has looked after Singapore and all of us. He has shown what Singapore can achieve under inspired leadership. He has made us proud to be Singaporeans.

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Few people have done so much for their fellow men in return for so little.

Certainly no one has done more for Singapore. Fewer still have worked so hard to phase themselves out from the centre of power, and actually given up power when the moment came. Mr Lee is one such man. We are all indebted to him.

My ministers and I consider ourselves trustees of Singapore. It is now our turn to shoulder this heavy responsibility. We shall maintain the high standards Mr Lee and his older colleagues have set. We shall discharge the trust which Singaporeans have placed in us, to the best of our ability.

The Prime Minister's job is a huge one. It has been made even larger by Mr Lee Kuan Yew. Any successor will find the shoes he has left too big. I do not intend to wear his shoes. I shall wear my own, and choose my own stride. I intend to be myself, and set my own style.

Singapore can do well only if her good sons and daughters are prepared to dedicate themselves to help others. I shall rally them to serve the country. For if they do not come forward, what future will we have'? I therefore call on my fellow citizens to join me, to run the next lap together.

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