

**SPEECH BY COMRADE ASYIFAH RASHID  
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**SINGAPORE'S PLACE IN THE WORLD**

Party Chairman, Secretary-General, Comrades, Brothers & Sisters,  
Good morning, Selamat Pagi, Vanakham, Ta jia zǎoshànghǎo

Allow me to start my speech in Malay before continuing in English – Para hadirin yang saya hormati sekalian, topik yang akan saya bincangkan pada hari ini ialah mengenai peranan yang boleh dimainkan oleh setiap warga Singapura, demi memajukan kedudukan kami di persada dunia. Di dalam ekonomi yang sedang mengalami perubahan yang pesat, kita, sebagai satu masyarakat, perlu bekerja sama untuk memikirkan cara-cara di mana kita dapat membantu antara satu sama lain, supaya masyarakat kita tidak akan ketinggalan. Dengan peningkatan teknologi, kita mula melihat sesetengah sektor industri semakin merosot dan ia telah mengakibatkan beberapa pekerjaan menjadi usang. Mahupun ini adalah satu perkara yang mungkin akan mengkhawatirkan segolongan orang, kita tidak perlu risau dan harus bersikap lebih positif dalam mengatasi segala rintangan yang ada. Sebaliknya, kita harus bermuhasabah diri, dan tidak berputus asa, agar kita sentiasa dapat memperbaiki diri dan mengasah kemahiran kita demi memajukan kedudukan kita, sebagai satu keluarga, masyarakat dan negara. Di mana adanya peluang, di situlah sepatutnya kita pergi.

Orang kita bukan lagi ketinggalan - Semakin ramai antara kami mempunyai kelayakan yang dihormati, pengalaman yang luas dan reputasi yang tinggi. Cuba lihat presiden kami, Puan Halimah Yacob. Beliau walaupun seorang Melayu yang rendah hari, mempunyai prinsip yang tegas, berwawasan tinggi dan dihormati ramai. Nah, jika beliau dapat menjadi seorang yang berjaya, begitu juga kita. Sebagai satu

masyarakat, saya mengalu-alukan supaya kita bekerja sama dan membantu antara satu sama lain, supaya kita dapat memajukan kedudukan negara, yang kita sanjungi.

Comrades, in the last dialogue session that was organised by comrades from PPF and YP, many of us spoke about the importance for Singapore to maintain an open economy and the need for us to re-skill, innovate and even welcome experts overseas to effectively facilitate continued improvement and in enhancing productivity for Singaporeans. This is especially useful because as a country, we must remain competitive and think of strategies so that we can be of value to the world. We have also seen growing efforts by the government to encourage people to take on new skills, through some initiatives such as the SkillsFuture, improved curriculum at the PET level and the likes of job transformation programmes.

But sometimes, I do wonder, despite the fact that we have so many of these wonderful programmes made available, why is it do we still see slow participation rate across the island? It could be because of the fact that we're just too busy or maybe, we're just too comfortable where we are at, that we do not see the need for us to get out of our comfort zone and take risks. You see, in my opinion, such mentality can impede our progress. Many of us are still considerably conservative and when asked to take risks, we would often rather not.

Today, as we see the rising global tension between US-China relationships, the growing popularity in nationalistic behaviours in several countries around the world, it behoves us to think about our place in the world. How can Singapore, amidst the many global uncertainties, rapid economic growth and rising competition, continue to ensure our survival as a multicultural society and still have a stake in the world.

I stand here today representing the voice of the youths first feeling humbled and grateful but also concerned. Grateful to our forefathers for their hard work in the last 52 years. For it is because of them, we have now been able to pursue our dreams and aspirations without having to worry about the lack of funding or the opportunity to do so. I have always been advised since young that, if I choose to work hard and study hard, I can achieve my dreams, just like everybody else. We live in a country that not

just talk about the values of meritocracy but upholds it and deliver it. For that, I am humbled and grateful, for being born in a country that is widely respected by many.

But I stand here concerned as well. Given the rapid globalisation and in the digitalisation age, we start to see countries progressing even faster than we have, making world news with their initiatives and cutting-edge ideas, awed by many. Malaysia, for example, had recently launched the world's first Digital Free Trade Zone in the efforts to capitalise on the growth of internet economy and cross-border eCommerce activities. China, who once used to learn from Singapore's model, is now charging its way forward, accelerating at a speed that barely any of us can keep up with. Just imagine, a country who once looked to us for inspiration, now possess a series of technologies, infrastructure and an education system way better than world class standards. My concern is that, if we don't start making conscious effort to change and do what we can to progress just as quickly, we may fall far behind, losing our place in the world.

As a country, we must continue to remain extraordinary. To do this, we need to equip ourselves with the right tools, resources and capabilities that would enable us to act quickly, innovate and make bold moves. In the last 52 years, Singapore have been successful in establishing ourselves a good reputation, known for our trust, reliability and efficiency. It is time that we now consider strategies to effectively build on these and better ourselves further. As individuals, we must first make conscious effort to transform ourselves. I remember this line mentioned by PM in the last rally that I really love and it resonated with me even till date. And I quote, "What I would like to have is that we be blessed with a divine discontent. Always not quite satisfied with what we have, always driven to do better"- unquote.

You see, comrades, we must strive to continually improve ourselves, upgrade our skillsets and think out of the box. For our Singapore to succeed, we, being the key resource to our country, must be well-equipped, be willing to take risks and make bold moves to effect change or else, we will not survive.

The risk-averse mentality and culture that we have can perhaps be addressed through our efforts to educate our people but, this also needs to be complemented with a suite

of other policies that would assist to mitigate risks. I was struck by DPM Tharman's explanation of our social security system being a trampoline and not just a safety net, while it softens the impact when someone falls, it provides just enough support to allow the person to get back up on his own two feet.

So for example, if the new digital economy would see the rise of new employment models that would include the rising number of ad-hoc jobs and freelancers, how then can we formulate our policies that would enable security support for such individuals? Perhaps, it may be useful to re-look at our current CPF models to suit the new trend, as well as having trade unions and trade associations to consider expanding their support for these individuals.

Now, so far I have highlighted the importance of why we need to transform ourselves, noted the possible challenge given our conservative mindset, and proposed a way to overcome it. But having worked with Madam Halimah Yacob in the last two years in Marsiling, she has always reminded me of the importance of inclusiveness and in ensuring that no is left behind in our call for action. For Singapore to succeed, I alluded that we must transform ourselves. However, this is not just a call for selected Singaporeans but every single one of us - the rich and the poor, the young and not so young, and people with disabilities. We all have a part to play in making a difference for our Singapore. In order to do this successfully, there must be the enablers and the relevant platforms in place to allow everyone, from all walks of life, to improve and transform ourselves.

If there is a need for us to transform ourselves to ensure that we can remain competitive in the world, then let us work together to heed the call. Only then, will we be able to collectively make bold and daring changes as a nation, be the first movers in terms of our strategies and approaches and remain as a country widely respected by the rest of the world.

In one of my favourite songs composed by the late Zubir Said entitled, Semoga Bahagia (or better known as the Sama-sama maju ke hadapan song...), it has a line that calls us to strive for excellence so that we can prove our worth to the world. And

it goes like this, “Capailah nama yang mulia pemuda pemuda. Supaya kita ada harga di mata dunia.”

So fellow Comrades, let us all work together to transform ourselves and strive for excellence. It starts with us - you, me, all of us here, believing that we can make a difference and shape our future, Singapore’s future.

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