

**SPEECH BY COMRADE JAGATHISHWARAN RAJO
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SOCIAL COMPACT IN SINGAPORE

Party Chairman,

Secretary General,

Comrades from the PAP,

Sisters and Brothers from the NTUC,

When I came to the event this morning, some acknowledged me as comrade and some addressed me as brother. To me, identify myself as both a comrade and a brother and this alludes to our symbiotic relationship between the PAP and NTUC.

Please allow me to speak in Tamil before I continue my speech in English.

கட்சி நண்பர்களே

தேசிய தொழிற்சங்க காங்கிரஸ் சகோதரர்களே

உங்கள் அனைவருக்கும் என் முதற்கண் வணக்கம்.

இந்த மாநாட்டில் நமது சமூக அமைப்பைப் பற்றி பேசுவதில் நான் பெரும் மகிழ்ச்சி அடைகிறேன்.

எனது பார்வையில் முன்று முக்கிய கூறுகள் நமது சமூக அமைப்பில் அடங்கும்.

முதலாவதாக, ஒவ்வொரு சிங்கப்பூரரும் சொந்த வீட்டைக் கொண்டிருத்தல்.

இரண்டாவதாக, ஒவ்வொரு சிங்கப்பூரரும் இனம், மொழி, மத வேறுபாடுகள் இன்றி சம வாய்ப்புகள் கொண்டிருத்தல்.

முன்றாவதாக, இதமாக முதுமை அடைதல்.

நமது நாடு அடுத்த ஐம்பது ஆண்டுகளின் பயணத்தை மேற்கொள்ளும்போது இந்த மூன்று கூறுகளே நமது சமூக அமைப்பின் அடித்தளமாக அடங்கும். நமது சமூக அமைப்பு மேன்மேலும் நமது நாட்டிற்கும் நமது மக்களுக்கும் தொர்டர்ச்சியாக பயனளிக்க, அரசாங்கம், தொழில்கள் மற்றும் தனி மனிதர்களும் கூட்டுப் பொறுப்பு எடுக்க வேண்டும்.

அரசாங்கம் மட்டுமே அணைத்து பொறுப்பை எடுக்க வேண்டும் என்று எண்ணினால் சமூக நலப்பாதுகாப்பு சார்ந்த கொள்கைகள், அரசாங்கத்தின் வரவு செலவு திட்டத்தில் ஒரு பெரிய பங்கை வகிக்கும்.

எனவே அரசாங்கம் சமூக நலப்பாதுகாப்பு சார்ந்த கொள்கைகளை வரையும்போது அவை குடும்பம் மற்றும் தனி மனித பொறுப்பை வலியுறுத்தவேண்டும்.

இதன் மூலம் நாம் பொறுப்புமிக்க சிங்கப்பூர்களை உருவாக்க முடியும்.

நன்றி வணக்கம்!

A very good morning to all of you. It gives me great honour to speak at this convention on the topic of our social compact.

I would like to share my personal experience. In 2008, it was unfortunate that my mother had both her legs amputated at the age of 46 due to diabetes. At that time, I was still an undergrad at university. It was the toughest period for my family then. My father and sister had to shoulder the family expenses. To reduce the family burden, I gave tuition for my pocket money. Government schemes such as Medisave and other social welfare schemes provided my family with support to cope with living costs. I was grateful for the government assistance as we were assured of a roof over our heads and reasonable financial assistance for us to get by. I also realised that family and individual responsibility were also equally important. This was also the period where I appreciated the values of collective responsibility and self-reliance.

What defines our social compact today? There are three key principles which sum up our social compact.

Firstly, every Singaporean having their own home, instilling a strong sense of belonging to our country.

Secondly, every Singaporean having equal opportunities, regardless of race, language or religion and this is through our principle of meritocracy.

Thirdly, every Singaporean having the assurance to age gracefully.

As our nation building efforts head towards the next 50 years, these three principles continue to be the cornerstone of our social compact.

Maintaining our social compact is important to us as a country. If this breaks down, we will lose a sense of rootedness and we have seen a recent example out there, Brexit, where the people of United Kingdom voted to withdraw from the European Union. If we do not uphold our social compact well, our multi-racial society will be divided. Race, language and religion are fault lines that have torn many societies apart. In America, the

communal differences between the whites and the rest continue to be a perennial problem. The existence of wage gaps between the whites and the rest and access to education and jobs by the vulnerable groups invoke socio-economic instability in the country. Hence, upholding our social compact is essential to our country.

Social compact is about our country serving us, as the people. As for us, the people serving our country, and us the people serving each other. What will it take for our social compact to remain the same in the future? Currently our parents' generation and my generation pay our way and save for our children by not passing the burden to the future generation. Can we have the same expectations for our children's generation?

There have been several calls to the Government to further strengthen our social safety nets and promote inclusiveness. I do agree that the Government should continue to be committed to providing adequate social security for the vulnerable segments of our population. Over the years, schemes such as Pioneer Generation Package, Silver Support Scheme, Medshield Life to mention a few, have been rolled out to ensure that healthcare remains affordable to all Singaporeans, regardless of age and income levels. While these are good schemes that benefit us as Singaporeans to cope with the rising cost of healthcare, they do bite into our country's budget each year.

Our country's expenditure on social security continues to increase year by year and this raises the expectations of us as Singaporeans. We are fortunate enough to enjoy budget surpluses due to the significant contributions from the net investment returns from our reserves, which are not infinite. We must be cognisant of the fact that the global order as we know and its politics are evolving at a rapid pace. Uncertainties and disruptions, they are aplenty but there are opportunities to seize as well.

Today, we often hear the word, "disruption" and changes in the political and economic landscape around the world and region may not produce the same returns from the investment in our reserves for the Government to put into the budget and support our social policies fiscally. The government should be prudent yet committed to safeguarding the needs of the vulnerable groups.

We need to ensure that our social compact continues to work well for our country and our people, not only for today's generation but also for tomorrow's generation so that we can come together to celebrate SG100.

Therefore, I support that the Government should continue its commitment to ensure that every Singaporean has a home to live, has equal opportunities and has the confidence to age gracefully. However, I also urge that the social policies implemented by the Government should encourage and reinforce personal as well as family responsibility.

One of the values of the PAP is self-reliance. Hence, I urge that the party continue to emphasize the value of self-reliance: "No one owes us a living. We will avoid creating the dependency syndrome a welfare state generates." Moving forward, our social policies should promote collective responsibility of the Government, businesses and individuals so that our social security system is sustainable. In order for our social compact to remain viable, our social policies should nurture responsible and resilient individuals supplementing the Government's efforts.

Together we shall build a nation, strong and united. Thank you!
