

**BICENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION DINNER
SPEECH BY MR ROLAND NG
PRESIDENT OF SINGAPORE CHINESE CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
TIME: 6.30 PM, DECEMBER 3, 2019
VENUE: SHANGRI-LA HOTEL**

Honourable Minister Mr Chan Chun Sing
Your Excellencies,
Members of Parliament and Senior Government Officials,
Dr Alexius A. Pereira, President of Eurasian Association,
Mr Prasoon Mukherjee, Vice-Chairman of Singapore Indian Chamber of
Commerce & Industry,
Mr Fazli Mansor, Honorary Secretary of Singapore Malay Chamber of
Commerce & Industry,
Business Leaders, Council Members and Members of Singapore Chinese
Chamber of Commerce & Industry,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening everyone!

A warm welcome to Minister Chan and all for attending this dinner
organised by SCCC to commemorate Singapore's bicentennial.

More than two hundred years ago, our forefathers arrived on this island.
Regardless of race, language and religion, they persevered and forged
ahead alongside the indigenous people here to lay down a solid economic
foundation to build a fledgling Singapore. To date, Singapore has not only
overcome internal and external challenges one after another and
transformed from a Third-World economy into a First World economy, it
went beyond its national capacity to gain tremendous influence and

standing in Southeast Asia and even the world. 1819 is a year worth commemorating.

The Bicentennial is not just about tracing Singapore's history, but also about reflecting on the impact of the past 700 years of developments, and what that process means to SCCCI. At the same time, we must also explore how SCCCI could exist in symbiosis with Singapore and Singaporeans in its future development.

Singapore went through ups and downs in its history, and every developmental milestone was about making a choice. 1819 was a crucial turning point in Singapore's history. After Raffles landed in Singapore, he set it up as a trading post and established a free trade port. Since then, Singapore rapidly developed from an open and multi-purpose port into a key centre for entrepot trade, and then made strides towards free trade, prosperity and modernity.

Our forefathers went through hardships together during the Japanese Occupation, committed themselves to post-war reconstruction work and participated in Singapore's nation-building process. These shared memories and experiences changed their concepts of home and country. They saw opportunities to secure a living and get ahead on this island. They started to build their families and establish their careers here. They shifted from the desire to eventually return to their original home towns to putting down their roots here. Compatriots from all ethnic groups resolutely joined hands to work together to create a prosperous and stable Singapore.

Being multiracial, multi-religious and multicultural is a unique strength of Singapore. To Singapore, "harmony" shapes our culture. This value leads to harmonious co-existence, prosperity and progress, which are conducive to our development. As Singapore went through its formative stages, our leaders have constantly reminded our people of the importance of harmony and solidarity. The past presidents of SCCCI had also emphasised time and again that "unity is strength" and "promoting the building of a harmonious society and creating a pro-business

environment are essential prerequisites for driving economic development."

Ladies and gentlemen!

Founding Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew once said: "The history of SCCCI reflects the history of Singapore." SCCCI went through the different phases of Singapore's history, witnessed the growth of the country, and shared in the joys and difficulties of its development. SCCCI is an important bridge between the government and the people. Since its establishment in 1906, SCCCI has played important roles in four major areas, namely, society, businesses, trade as well as culture and education.

Before Singapore's independence, SCCCI led the Chinese community in actively fighting for their right to local citizenship. It took 10 years of hard work before 220,000 Chinese were legally granted citizenship rights and could build their homes here together with their compatriots from the other ethnic groups. In 1964, an ethnic conflict erupted in Singapore. SCCCI cooperated with the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry to assist the government to calm the various ethnic groups and quickly restore social stability and business order.

After Singapore gained independence, SCCCI supported the national service system which strengthened its defence capabilities. In 1967, the government implemented national service. SCCCI held a gathering to raise defence funds from trade associations. Every year, SCCCI highlights the importance of patriotism through our Memorial Service for victims of the Japanese Occupation and our SAF Day initiative.

The 60th Council of SCCCI has set down three major work thrusts, namely, deepening the work of perpetuating the Chinese Entrepreneur Spirit, promoting succession in family businesses, and deepening the work of helping businesses to digitalise and internationalise. Over the past two years, SCCCI received government support in leading more than 30 trade associations to move into the Trade Association Hub and helping trade associations and enterprises to transform and develop their capabilities

through digitalisation and internationalisation, as well as through cross-industry collaboration.

Today, the uncertain factors shaping the world have increased significantly. As long as we are building on the solid foundation laid down by our forefathers as we persevere to strengthen ourselves, support each other, and forge ahead with courage, Singapore's future will certainly always be bright. No matter how times have changed, the business community and trade associations must stand united and partner with the government to overcome challenges, maintain peace and stability in Singapore, and drive Singapore's prosperous development.

Today marks another most significant date. On the 3rd of December 1959, our first Head of State Mr Yusok Bin Ishak was sworn in on the steps of City Hall. On that same day, our national Flag, Anthem and State Crest were formally introduced. 60 years on, at 11.20 am today, a new recording of Singapore's National Anthem, "Majulah Singapura" has been released. This is another major milestone which we are proud to celebrate in our journey as a nation.

In closing, on behalf of SCCCI, I sincerely thank Minister Chan Chun Sing and all our distinguished guests for coming here to be with us to commemorate Singapore's bicentennial. Let us together wish Singapore peace, stability and great fortune! I wish all of you good health and success in your business endeavours!

Thank you!