

“47 Hill Street” – An SCCCI-SG50 Special Exhibition
Opening Ceremony
Speech by SCCCI President Thomas Chua

Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, President of the Republic of Singapore

Minister for Health Gan Kim Yong

Ministers of State, Members of Parliament, Senior Government Officials

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon! It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the opening of our SCCCI-SG50 Special Exhibition. We have named it “47 Hill Street” not only because it is the location of our Chamber building, but also because it is a heritage building that has witnessed many important episodes in the history of Singapore, both before and after Singapore achieved independence.

For example, in the 1950s, the Chamber started the campaign to fight for citizenship rights, signalling the strong desire of many Chinese immigrants to take root in this country. It was a long hard struggle which finally succeeded in attaining citizenship for ethnic Chinese immigrants as well as all other ethnic groups.

Officially opened in September 1964 after demolishing the old structure and rebuilding on the site of 47 Hill Street, it represented a change in status for immigrants who originally hoped to return to their hometowns, and who finally decided to make Singapore their permanent home. It has become an important base to congregate Chinese businessmen, and promote Singapore’s economic development.



The multi-media show and exhibition we have prepared includes many details of our Chamber's history in the context of Singapore. We sincerely hope it would be meaningful to the pioneer generation, the current generation as well as the younger generation.

I will now continue with my speech in Mandarin.

Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, President of the Republic of Singapore

Minister for Health Gan Kim Yong

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Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon! The SCCCI has operated from 47 Hill Street ever since the early 20th century. This heritage building was funded by the voluntary contributions of our member companies, demonstrating the communal spirit and unity of Chinese entrepreneurs. The building was officially opened in September 1964, and has become an important base to congregate Chinese businessmen, and promote Singapore's economic development. Even before Singapore achieved independence, 47 Hill Street was deeply involved in many important historical events.

In the 1950s, the Chamber started the campaign to fight for citizenship rights, signalling the strong desire of many Chinese immigrants to take root in this country. It was a long hard struggle which finally succeeded in attaining citizenship for ethnic Chinese immigrants as well as all other ethnic groups.

The preparations of constructing the current building at 47 Hill Street started from 1958. This has become the true symbol of a change in status for immigrants who originally hoped to return to their hometowns, and who finally decided to make Singapore their permanent home.

In the days before independence, the Chamber was actively involved in Singapore's politics, the economy, culture, education and the community; after independence, the Chamber

withdrew from the political arena, and devoted its efforts in supporting the government to develop the economy, and continued to adhere to its mission of supporting community, cultural, and educational development. The stories revolving around 47 Hill Street are like precious pearls scattered about in history, and when we string them all together in context, they become a priceless treasure which represents the mission of the Chinese business community. The SCCCI-SG50 Special Exhibition, is a completely new way to display this priceless treasure.

We have just viewed the Special Exhibition. This time, we have broken tradition to make use of many new techniques which are more appealing to the younger crowd. This is also the very first time the Chamber is using modern technology for a history exhibition, the objective being to appeal to young people, break down the generation gap, and impress upon the younger generation the values and selfless spirit of the Chinese business pioneers. This is the objective that the Special Exhibition, “47 Hill Street”, hopes to achieve.

Thus, on behalf of the SCCCI, I would like to express my appreciation to the Production Team comprising three generations. Apart from the Chamber’s internal staff, we have also enlisted the support and assistance of many external parties, including the government, the Chinese community, the media, technical experts, and veterans from culture, the arts and education, professionals, volunteers and students.

Throughout an entire year, the Production Team has combed through historical archives, refined the essence, edited and proofread the materials, and produced the special effects. We have also recruited students to be Ambassadors and guides for the exhibition. In other words, the whole process of producing this exhibition itself is a form of succession.

Today, “47 Hill Street” is being officially opened, and we are extremely grateful to the President and all distinguished guests for attending the ceremony, and all friends for your kind support! This is the Chamber’s experimental new endeavour in promoting history and culture, and we welcome everyone’s valued feedback. At the same time I hope you would



spread the word to your friends and relatives, encouraging more people to view the exhibition and learn more about many fascinating historical tales.

Quoting from an ancient Chinese saying: "Using history as a mirror, we can see rise and fall; using people as a mirror, we can understand gain and loss." Using history as a mirror, we can understand the reasons behind a country's rise and fall; using people as a mirror, we can review if our methods are right or wrong. The history of Singapore is the foundation of our future; Chinese pioneers are our role models. The Chamber's current achievements must be attributed to the passion and contributions of each successive President and council members, in their work of serving the nation and the community. This year is the 50th year of Singapore's independence. From now on, Singapore will be embarking on a new era, and we need to let this spirit of giving back to the society carry on indefinitely. All along, the Chamber has devoted itself to Singapore's prosperity; as we look ahead to Singapore's future, the Chamber will stay united in embarking on new areas of excellence!

Thank you.