



PM Lee Hsien Loong at the Swearing-In Ceremony of Mayors

PM Lee Hsien Loong | 24 May 2017

PM Lee Hsien Loong delivered a speech at the Swearing-in Ceremony of Mayors on 24 May 2017.

Mr Chan Chun Sing, Deputy Chairman of PA, Mayors, Parliamentary Colleagues, District Councillors, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Happy to join you this morning for the Mayors' swearing-in ceremony. I would like to congratulate our Mayors, Dr Maliki Osman, Dr Teo Ho Pin, Ms Low Yen Ling and Ms Denise Phua on their reappointments, and Mr Desmond Choo on his new appointment.

I would also like to thank Mr Teo Ser Luck for his contribution as Mayor and as Coordinator. Ser Luck has served as Northeast Community Development Council (CDC) Mayor for eight years since 2009. He understands his residents' needs well, and he has implemented many well-received programmes including a Café Corner where residents can chit chat over drinks and snacks at Residents' Committees (RCs), Community Clubs (CCs) and void decks. The North East Community Toy Library and Mobile Library Kiosks so that children have a common pool of toys and books to share. Study corners in RCs and CCs so that students can have a conducive space to study for their exams. When he saw that working professionals needed space to work outside their homes, he set up the PMET Resource Centre in Punggol 21 CC, which also supports PMETs with job assistance and skills training.

Ser Luck was appointed Chairman of the Mayors' Committee to coordinate programmes across the five CDCs. As Chairman, he led CDCs to develop flagship programmes like distributing milk powder to needy families and the Community Employment Programme. Ser Luck is returning to the private sector, and is therefore stepping down as Mayor and as Chairman of the Mayors' Committee at the end of this term. Desmond is taking over as Mayor of Northeast

CDC, and Yen Ling is taking over as Chairman of the Mayor's Committee. I am confident that they will continue his good work. We thank Ser Luck and we wish the new Mayors all the best.

I would also like to thank all the Councillors. All of you are volunteers, many of you are holding full-time jobs. You have supported the CDCs and Mayors with dedication and passion. I am happy that Mayors and Councillors, past and present, are here today, to witness the swearing-in ceremony and to commemorate the 20th anniversary of CDCs.

The CDCs have come a long way since they were first set up in 1997. You saw some of the milestones in the video just now. You have promoted social cohesion in our multi-racial society, strengthened community bonds, and supported grassroots advisors and grassroots organisations on the frontlines, to deliver effective social and community programmes to their residents in every ward.

Initially, CDCs were given two responsibilities: social assistance and employment assistance. The Mayors had to build up the capabilities from scratch. They trained officers, and worked together with volunteer welfare organisations and social service agencies. Over time, the CDC's community-based arrangements developed into separate and more formal institutions such as the OnePeople.SG and the Workforce Development Agency.

Over 20 years, CDCs have seen a lot. You have responded to crises. During the SARS outbreak, you delivered meals to patients who were quarantined at home. During the Global Financial Crisis, CDCs implemented recession relief packages to help affected residents.

CDCs have also supported national movements. You have collaborated with grassroots organisations and corporate partners to develop environmental blueprints for your districts. You have participated in the Caring for the Silver Community programme, and rolled out many social activities to keep seniors mentally, socially and physically active. You have nurtured arts groups, worked with National Arts Council and community partners to bring arts to residents.

In recent years, CDCs have linked up with a broader range of partners to run Flagship Programmes. The Law Society and CASE, to raise awareness of legal and consumer rights. SPRING and Trade Associations & Chambers, to set up SME Centres providing information on government grants and schemes. Charity foundations to help needy families defray cost of school essentials and of course milk powder.

Besides these Flagship Programmes, which all CDCs offer, each CDC also has its own outreach activities. Each district has its own circumstances and residents' profile. CDCs need to tailor these programmes to suit their different needs and they have done so. But of course CDCs should continue coordinating closely with one another, and keep their programmes in line with government objectives and national priorities.

The CDCs' ABC Mission: to "Assist the Needy", to "Bond the People", and to "Connect the Community", which was established 10 years ago, remains relevant. CDCs must continue to be a bridge between residents and the Government. Not just hands and legs on the ground to implement the programmes but also eyes and ears to identify emerging needs and gaps in the current social and

employment assistance systems. And you need to be hearts and minds too, to come up with new ideas for tackling these issues and addressing residents' concerns.

One urgent issue which we face now is worker upgrading. Our economy is restructuring, and workers need to upgrade themselves. SkillsFuture offers schemes, pathways and support to workers to do this. But realising lifelong learning and constant upgrading requires not just programmes and resources, because for many people, it is also a mindset change. I hope CDCs will support the work of the Future Economy Council, by encouraging people in your districts to adapt to these changes which are happening in our economy, to adopt lifelong learning as a cause, and to become more employable and open up brighter prospects for their families.

Another community building priority is SGSecure. Our community must rally together during crises, and citizens need to give back and help one another to succeed. We are strong only if our ties are close and people trust one another, despite having different backgrounds, or belonging to different ethnic groups or different faiths. We also need to build rapport between the people and public institutions, such as the Home Team and the PA grassroots organisations. That is what SGSecure seeks to do.

To support SGSecure, CDCs need to work closely with OnePeople.SG, government agencies, grassroots organisations, community and corporate partners. It is patient work which will take years, but it will pay off handsomely if ever we experience a terrorist attack, like this most recent one in Manchester a few days ago, or a civil emergency. By involving volunteers in these meaningful projects, CDCs can strengthen the gotong royong spirit, and grow and develop your team of active volunteers. This is part of making Singapore "a Great Home and a Caring Community" for everyone of us.

I would like to congratulate former, current and new mayors, as well as CDC Vice-Chairmen and Councillors for your contributions and achievements over the last 20 years. You have made a difference in the lives of residents, forged strong bonds with partners, and built an extensive network focussed on service to the community.

I trust the newly appointed Mayors will continue the good work of your predecessors, and keep the CDC flag flying high for many years to come.

Thank you very much.

Topics: Families and communities, Governance, Multi-Racial and multi-religious society, Social safety nets

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