

ANNOUNCEMENT BY SPEAKER
SITTING OF 6 APRIL 2020, MONDAY

Honourable Members,

Our fathers lived through years of deprivation and suffering during the Second World War. But they emerged hardened and determined to throw off the shackles of not only the Japanese, but also of British colonial rule. From these tribulations began the journey to Independence, to build a new and sovereign home we call Singapore.

2 Through the years, we have faced numerous setbacks and grave challenges. We have weathered them all and have emerged stronger.

3 COVID-19 will be a challenge like no other we have experienced in our lifetime, and possibly in the short 55 years as a nation.

4 COVID-19 will define our generation.

5 Years from now, people will ask, where were you? What did you do? Did we hoard...again? Did we reach out to someone in need? Did we rail against the inconvenience of staying at home? Did we gather at malls and clubs for one last party? Or did we hunker down and make the most of it ... to contribute and comfort where we could online? Work out new solutions. Learn and stay curious. Or just to spend more time with our family and loved ones.

6 Did we rise to the call to be, really, one united people? Or did we gripe and be gripped by fear, or did we choose to learn and grow as a person? As a people.

7 What new journeys will these tribulations set us on?

8 Will COVID-19 make us a better and stronger Singapore? Or is this that pivotal moment, where we begin to be relegated to be a footnote in history?

9 All of us here are balancing at this very point. In the space of one and a half months, we are meeting again to discuss yet another Budget. It is upon us Parliamentarians to lead in this critical time both within this Chamber, and outside with our community. We must robustly debate and properly pass the laws and any supplementary funds the Government requires to act in protecting our fellow Singaporeans. It is therefore essential that Parliament Sittings continue.

10 We are sitting during extraordinary times. We are also sitting farther apart from one another than ever before, literally rising to the occasion, all the way up to the rafters in the public galleries. But we must remember that even as we safe-distance ourselves, we need to be nationally closer, to be of one heart and one mind in dealing with the challenges at hand.

11 We also need to be socially closer to our citizens, to hear and speak their voices here, to provide them comfort, hope and confidence.

12 I echo our President in saying this to all of us here and to our fellow Singaporeans.

13 What we choose to say and do now will define us for the tomorrows to come. As individuals. As a society. As a nation.

14 Who we choose to stand with, and walk with today, will define us for the ages. As a people. As Singaporeans.

15 Together, let us walk this journey and write this chapter of our story to the very best of our ability.

16 So that years from now, in better times, and those times will come, we can look back at this epic period and share our tales of strife, of struggle, and triumph, with our little ones.

17 Majulah Singapura!
