

## **ANNOUNCEMENT BY SPEAKER**

**SITTING OF 4 MAY 2020, MONDAY**

Honourable Members,

Today is the mid-way point of the extended circuit breaker in Singapore's fight against COVID-19. I am heartened to see that Singaporeans have, by and large, remained steadfast in cooperating with all the various measures imposed. Some citizens and private enterprises have even embarked on their own ground-up initiatives to do their part in looking out for the well-being of the most vulnerable in our communities, and keeping them safe. This is indeed our SG United spirit in action that will make Singapore emerge better and stronger from this crisis.

2 As I have said before, and it bears repeating, the onus remains on us, parliamentarians, to continue to lead in critical times both within this Chamber and within our communities. It will not be business as usual as we find different ways of remaining connected to our constituents in carrying out our roles and responsibilities. But those roles and responsibilities are real. But even as we do so, we stand in solidarity with all Singaporeans in supporting and adhering to the Government's circuit breaker measures as these are adjusted with time, and depending on the

prevailing situation. All Members from today will wear masks within Parliament House, and only remove them temporarily while delivering speeches in the Chamber so you can be heard clearly.

3 Whatever challenging circumstances we face as a nation, the essential and fundamental role of Parliament continues. All over the world, other parliaments are similarly doing their best to persevere despite the extraordinary COVID-19 times we are living in. And our Parliament in Singapore can do no less.

4 This is why the Bill that the Leader of the House will be introducing today is timely and significant. In the current climate of uncertainty brought about by COVID-19, it is imperative that we prepare for exigencies, such as the scenario where it is impossible, it is unsafe or inexpedient for all Members to meet at one place for parliamentary proceedings. So we must be primed and ready to swiftly respond should such exigencies happen. The Bill therefore proposes an amendment to the Constitution to establish a legal framework for arrangements to be made for Parliament and its committees to meet and despatch business; with Members being present at 2 or more appointed places, if necessary, under continuity arrangements.

5 As Speaker, I have provided my views and advice on the parliamentary law and procedures to be considered in the drafting of the Bill. The ultimate form and modalities of such continuity arrangements would be looked into once the Bill is passed. For now, I look forward to hearing any views Members may have on the Bill, on how such continuity arrangements can best serve our work in Parliament when exigencies arise.

6 In tackling the COVID-19 situation, what must remain constant is that we must always be planning and preparing in advance the best that we can. We must remember that this pandemic outbreak is unprecedented in scale. Should the worst-case scenario happen, we will work in concert in executing these contingencies, with the safety and well-being of one another, our families, and loved ones always being of the utmost priority. We will learn where we can from other countries and other parliaments, and implement what works best in our Singapore context. We must not let our collective Singapore can-do spirit succumb to this virus now. When, and not if, this crisis is over, we must remain vigilant and tackle any new or emergent threats head-on with the same resolve and

fortitude. This is how we will always be able to “Majulah Singapura!”, confidently advancing onwards as a nation and as a society. Thank you.

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