

**SPEECH BY MR SEAH KIAN PENG
SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF SINGAPORE
AT THE END OF THE COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY DEBATES
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
6 MARCH 2026**

Unity, Duty and Our Particular Prosperity

Honourable Members

1. The work we undertake in this House has never been more important. In a world filled with large dramatic developments, sensational revelations, and unending array of twists and turns, it is the careful, meticulous and practical work of government that makes a difference to people every day.

2. With more members in this 15th Parliament, the total time that we needed for this year's budget and COS debate was 12% more than last year, even though the number of cuts were fewer – by about a third.

3. As members know, I am a big advocate of the maxim "Less is More".

4. It has indeed been an intense two weeks and I want to start by thanking all Members for your contributions. From my perspective, there were a few highlights in this year's debate.

5. First, there was unanimous support from both sides of the House for Budget 2026. In most countries, this is rare. Our unity puts us in a good place to face a very challenging future.

6. For the first time, this year's entire budget and COS debate took place within the period of Ramadan so I thank our Muslim colleagues who had to work through this period where every sitting day ended well past the iftar time. Last evening, Minister Masagos as he broke fast, took a sip of water and immediately proceeded to deliver his speech. We honour all our Muslim colleagues for your commitment to your public duties.

7. As Speaker, I have the rare privilege of listening to all your speeches, and perhaps more able than most to distinguish between form and substance. Some members were able to deliver crisp responses and ask succinct clarifications – others were as they say a bit “cheong hei” (or “long winded”). There was also a one-word response by one Minister - no preamble or context or elaboration needed. A simple one word “No” was all that was needed. That was Minister Balakrishnan. For MOS Alvin Tan, a five-word reply will do – “Please don't feed the birds.”

8. We also know who amongst us can speak fluently in 3 languages; are poets in the making; can speak slow and go at great speed - though the latter is not

encouraged as it means risking not only the Minister being unable to fully capture your points, but it also places undue stress to our interpreters.

9. In the course of these sittings, we also found out members' favourite singers - from Bon Jovi to Black Eyed Peas, Aaron Kwok, Taylor Swift and our very own Benjamin Kheng.

10. Throughout the COS debate, there was only one day where we had an official break. On all other days, we persevered without one. I did this to the extent possible because I wanted as many members to be able to seek their clarifications before the guillotine time.

11. It was certainly not to test one's stamina without the need for a bio break. Having said that, I established a new personal record for myself – by being in the same seat for a good 6 hours 10 mins, a record I hope I do not need to break!

12. Some members also wondered whether my magic 'mute the microphone' button was functioning properly, and as quite a few members found out, it is in good working order. I hope this would be used very sparingly going forward and look to your self-discipline in this regard. Indeed, there was a member who realised

she had run out of time and stopped her speech without the need for me to turn the mic off – thank you Ms Cassandra Lee.

13. As Speaker, here is my advice – Parliamentary speeches are not an exercise in word count. It is not how many words you use or how fast you speak, but clarity and importance of your main message.

14. This principle is even more critical for political office holders, who must use their time, beyond sharing their ministry's plans and explaining the rationale behind the policies, also tell Singaporeans how our lives will be improved, the trade-offs to be made, and what the country is requiring of us. Tell us the hard truths.

15. Minister Desmond Lee exemplified this approach, though he also gave us a challenging problem to solve. How truly Singaporean to have a maths test in the Chamber! As they say, never a dull moment in Parliament.

16. But the true meaning of debate is not when we agree, but how and why we disagree. This is not merely partisan disagreement, but a disagreement about ideas, which we have seen within the same party, as well as across party lines. This for me is a mark of the sanctity and legitimacy of the agreements we come to, and the laws we make, as well as the trust we have in each other.

17. Parliament functions best when we come with sound arguments and good intentions, bringing our diverse experiences and background to discuss and debate; when we remain open to listening without prejudice, when we strive to propose solutions – popular or otherwise – for our people, without pandering or playing to the gallery.

18. We may not hit on the correct note right from the start, but we try and try again. To paraphrase Prime Minister Wong and DPM Gan, and this applies not just to the problem of our low birthrate – we have not, we will not, and we cannot give up.

19. Each day, we wake up to an increasingly fractured world. Whilst we have been able to navigate well over the last six decades but as Prime Minister has reminded us, Singapore must brace for greater volatility and unpredictability. There will be more debates, more bills to pass and more challenges ahead.

20. As SMS Murali Pillai said yesterday, our history as a small island nation has given us a “particular prosperity” – a “prosperity that can remain ours, as long as we preserve and grow our courage and ability to navigate the high seas.”

21. Let us remember that this “particular prosperity” has been earned through the hard work, sacrifice and a deep sense of duty of all Singaporeans to one another.

22. Let us not take this for granted. As members of this 15th Parliament, whatever storms may range on the high seas or up in the skies, let us keep our eyes on the horizon that is the Singaporean people. We must leave the world in no doubt of our commitment to do what is best for Singapore. Only then, can we secure our future together in a changed world.

23. Before I conclude, let me express my gratitude to the Leader of the House, Minister Indranee Rajah, Deputy Leader, SMS Zaqq Mohamad, my two Deputy Speakers, Mr Christopher de Souza and Mr Xie Yao Quan, and also to my dedicated and competent Parliamentary Clerks and all Parliamentary staff, whose unseen but invaluable work ensured that proceedings went smoothly throughout these two weeks.

24. Thank you.