

LETTER OF APPRECIATION FROM PRIME MINISTER
LEE KUAN YEW TO DR GOH KENG SWEE ON 28 DEC 84

“Dear Keng Swee

This is a most difficult letter of appreciation to write. To call it a letter of appreciation is to belittle the contribution you have made since June 1959. It was your stupendous exertions from 1959 to 1965 that kept Singapore’s economy from faltering and floundering through those difficult years. Few remember that we were overwhelmed by widespread unemployment of over 12 per cent. Those were dreary and grim years.

It was my good fortune to have strong men around me in Cabinet, right from the start. My debt to you is immeasurable. Your analysis of acute problems with academic detachment and objectivity in the middle of a major crisis was invaluable. Looming threats shrink into less fearsome proportions when seen in perspective. Your robust attitude encouraged me to press on against seemingly unwinnable odds. This was especially so when we suddenly become independent in 1965 and we had to provide for a new way of making a living. Together with Raja and Chin Chye (up to 1980, when he left the

Government) all of you stiffened my morale at times of crisis, which is when the mettle of a government is put to the test.

Your biggest contribution to me personally was that you stood up to me whenever you held the contrary view. You challenged my decisions and forced me to re-examine the premises on which they were made. Thus we reached better decisions. This benign tension made our relationship healthy and fruitful.

No panegyric can do justice to you. A whole generation of Singaporeans take their present standard of living for granted because you had laid the foundations of the economy of modern Singapore. And you catered for more than bare living. Singaporeans who bring their children to the Bird Park, Chinese Garden, Japanese Garden, Jurong Golf Club, or Sentosa, or who listen to the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, owe their pleasures to you. Year after year you strenuously pressed me to support these loss-making companies. You convinced me that if we are to achieve our long term aspirations for Singaporeans then, as a people we must begin to have some feeling for the aesthetic in life.

I am happy that you have had agreed to be MD of the GIC/MAS, until after the budget in March 1985 when Joe Pillay will take over from you. Then you will be Deputy Chairman GIC/MAS. I shall ask you to take up various tasks

from time to time. They do not, however, make up for the loss of your presence in the Cabinet, where the big issues are thrashed out and major decisions taken.

Now that you are laying down your office I hope you will continue to be stretched, and that you will remain actively involved in the affairs of Singapore.

Yours ever

Harry

28 DEC 84

Time of Issue: 1900 hrs