

**Check Against Delivery**

**SPEECH BY PROFESSOR TOMMY KOH**  
**CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD**  
**AT THE LAUNCH OF "SINGAPORE: THE ENCYCLOPEDIA" ON**  
**MONDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2006, THE ISTANA**

President Nathan, Minister Lee Boon Yang, Senior Minister of State Zainul Abidin Rasheed, Mr Didier Millet, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

In a departure from my usual three points, I intend to make 10 points this evening. I hope my wife will understand and forgive me for not complying with her standing instruction.

First, I wish to thank you, Mr President, for accepting our invitation to be our Guest-of-Honour and for giving us permission to use the Istana.

Second, I wish to thank Minister Lee Boon Yang for his personal encouragement and support and those of his Ministry, MICA.

Third, I wish to thank my good friend, Mr Didier Millet, and the EDM team led by Charles Orwin, Timothy Auger, Jimmy Yap, Ng Wei Chian, and many other colleagues consisting of researchers, writers, editors, designers, fact-checkers, etc. They had done a Herculean job to meet the deadline, putting in very long hours and, in some cases, burning themselves out. I hope that Didier will give the whole team a good vacation at Chez Millet in Bali! Will the EDM team please stand so that we can express our appreciation to you?

Fourth, I wish to thank the 231 experts who have helped us to write the 2,500 entries in the Encyclopedia. We have tried our best to identify an individual who is generally recognised as an expert in a field to write an entry in that field for us. Thus, for example, the entry on our stamps is written by a well-known philatelist, Dr Cheah Jin Seng. The entry on our orchids is written by a recognised authority, Dr Teoh Eng Soon. The entries on legal history are written by Dr Kevin Tan. The entry on cemeteries is written by Prof Brenda Yeoh, an expert on our cemeteries. Brenda, I could not explain to an enquirer what a nice girl like you are doing wandering around the graveyards of Singapore.

Fifth, I wish to thank the 36 sponsors who have helped us to achieve our target of S\$1.3 million. I will not ask them to stand because each of them will receive a copy of the Encyclopedia from the President later.

Sixth, I wish to thank the 13 members of the Editorial Advisory Board. They are: Mr Arun Mahizhnan, Acting Director, Institute of Policy Studies; Mr Alan Chan, CEO, Singapore Press Holdings; Mr Lim Chee Onn, Chairman, Keppel Corporation; Assistant Professor Noor Aisha Bte Abdul Rahman, Department of Malay Studies, National University of Singapore; Prof Shih Choon Fong, President, National University of Singapore; Prof Su Guanng, President, Nanyang Technological University; Prof Tan Chin Tiong, Provost, Singapore Management University; Associate Prof Tan Tai Yong, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore; Associate Prof Kwok Kian Woon, Head of Sociology, Nanyang Technological University; Mr Robin Tomlin, Vice-Chairman (Asia), UBS AG; Prof Wang Gungwu, Director, East Asian Institute; Dr N Varaprasad, Chief Executive, National Library Board; and Mr Peter Ho, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and concurrently Head of the Civil Service. They are all good friends and I have taken advantage of their friendships. They have been very generous with their advice, guidance and recommendations. We have spent many weekends and long plane rides vetting the drafts and proofs. In the final stage of our work, each member of the Board was responsible for the entries under a certain number of alphabets. Jimmy Yap made us sign our names on the proofs. We all complied. I do not know whether that makes us liable in case we are sued for defamation. I would also like to thank Mr Barry Desker, Mr K Kesavapany and Mr Kishore Mahbubani for helping me to vet the entries relating to defence and foreign affairs; and to thank Prof Tan Cheng Han for helping me to vet the entries relating to law and lawyers.

Seventh, some vital statistics about the Encyclopedia. It has 640 pages consisting of half a million words. It has more than 2,500 entries arranged alphabetically. It has 2,400 photographs, maps and illustrations. It weighs 3.2 kilograms.

Eighth, in writing the Encyclopedia, the team has tried to achieve the following objectives:

- (i) comprehensiveness
- (ii) currency
- (iii) authority
- (iv) objectivity, and
- (v) ease of use.

Ninth, does the Encyclopedia contain entries on our pioneer leaders, such as Mr Rajaratnam and Mr Lim Kim San? Yes. Does it exclude any one for political reasons? No. Does it exclude any one for moral reasons? No. Annabel Chong is in! You do not know who she is? Well, you must look it up in the Encyclopedia. Does it contain any surprises? Many. Can I give you any examples? No. I want to encourage you to buy a copy and find out for yourself.

Tenth, who is our target audience? Our target audience is everyone from students to adults, Singaporeans and friends of Singapore. We think the Encyclopedia should be in every home, school, community centre, company, embassy, hotel, library, club and with members of our diaspora. We also think that it would make a great gift for the 16,000 foreign guests who are expected to attend the IMF and World Bank Annual Meetings in Singapore.

Thank you very much.

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