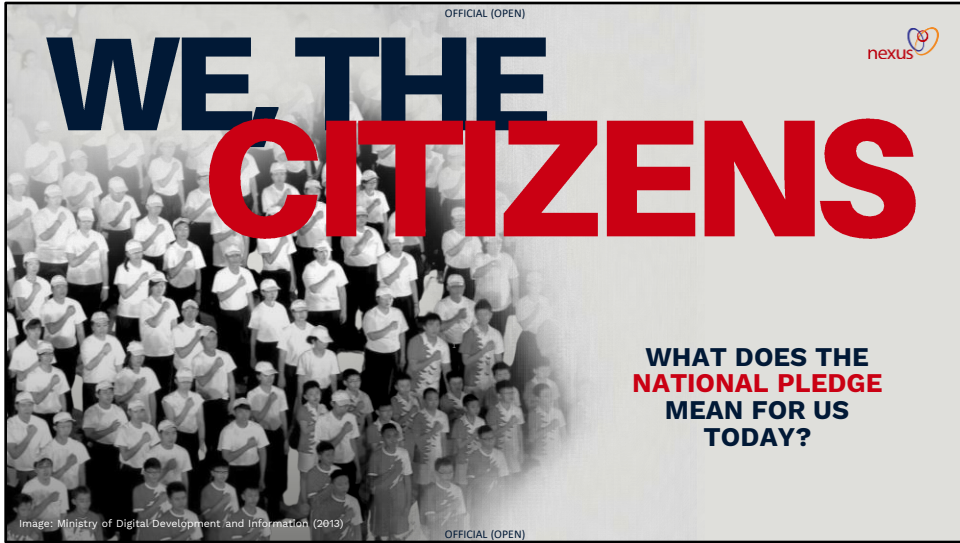


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**WE, THE
CITIZENS**

**WHAT DOES THE
NATIONAL PLEDGE
MEAN FOR US
TODAY?**

Image: Ministry of Digital Development and Information (2013)

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nexus

2026 marks
60 years of the Pledge

WE, THE CITIZENS OF SINGAPORE,
 PLEDGE OURSELVES AS **ONE UNITED PEOPLE,**
REGARDLESS OF RACE, LANGUAGE OR RELIGION,
 TO BUILD A **DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY**
 BASED ON **JUSTICE** AND **EQUALITY**
 SO AS TO ACHIEVE HAPPINESS, PROSPERITY
 AND PROGRESS FOR OUR NATION.



Image: National Archives of Singapore (1966)

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2

As we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Pledge this year, it is timely to reflect on what these words truly mean for us as Singaporeans, beyond simply reciting them.

Suggested questions to pose to audience:

1. *Which part of the pledge do you identify with the most, and why?*
2. *What's one recent moment where you saw the values of the pledge in action in your daily life?*

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Origins

1950s & 1960s **Communal tensions and series of racial riots**

16 Sep 1963 Singapore's merger with Malaysia

9 Aug 1965 Singapore gained independence following separation from Malaysia

18 Feb 1966 S. Rajaratnam suggested text for the Pledge to recite at school flag-raising ceremonies, in a letter to then-Minister for Education Ong Pang Boon

24 Aug 1966 **First recitation of the Pledge by 500,000 students**

Being a Singaporean is not a matter of ancestry.

IT IS CONVICTION AND CHOICE."

- S. Rajaratnam, Singapore's first Minister for Foreign Affairs

Image: ISEAS Library, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

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The Pledge emerged during a difficult and uncertain period in Singapore's history.

In the years leading up to Singapore's independence on 9 Aug 1965, we experienced communal tensions and racial riots which caused fear, loss of lives, and divisions within society.

As a young nation made up of people from different races, languages, and religions, Singapore needed to build not just our economy or infrastructure. **There was a pressing need to ensure that our people were united, with a shared sense of identity and belonging, so that divisions of the past would not be repeated.**

Written by then-Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr S. Rajaratnam in 1966, the Pledge expressed the ideals and values that would unite Singaporeans despite their differences. **Mr Rajaratnam believed that race, language, and religion were potentially divisive factors. He therefore used the Pledge to emphasise that these differences could be overcome if Singaporeans were united in their commitment to the country.**

Reference:

- <https://www.nhb.gov.sg/what-we-do/our-work/community-engagement/education/resources/national-symbols/national-pledge>

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Values

Multiculturalism
*regardless of race,
language or religion,*

Every Singaporean belongs as an equal member of society

Democracy
to build a democratic society...

Every citizen has a voice and a stake in shaping Singapore's future

Justice
...based on justice...

Every individual is treated fairly and with dignity


Equality
...and equality...

Every Singaporean has a fair opportunity to fulfil their potential, regardless of starting point



Image: Ministry of Education

Origins of the Pledge:
An Animation



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For six decades, the Pledge has reminded Singaporeans of the values that hold us together as one united people: multiculturalism, democracy, justice, and equality.

1. **Multiculturalism** – Multiculturalism means that no single racial, linguistic, or religious group defines Singapore and that every Singaporean belongs as an equal member of society. This belief is reflected in the Pledge, which reminds us that we are one people, “regardless of race, language, or religion”. We view our diversity as a source of strength, not division.
2. **Democracy** – Under democracy, every citizen has a voice and stake in shaping Singapore's future. This means voicing our views and ideas responsibly in public discussions, playing an active role in our community, and sharing the responsibility to face challenges and difficult decisions needed to build our nation.
3. **Justice** – Justice is the promise that every individual can expect to be treated fairly and with dignity. Rules apply equally to everyone, regardless of status, wealth, or background. This principle has been foundational to Singapore's development – a society where people trust that the system is fair, that effort is rewarded, and that wrongdoing is addressed without favour. Justice requires our active commitment – to act with integrity in our own dealings, speak up when someone is treated unfairly, and to extend fairness and dignity to those around us, including those with less power or voice.
4. **Equality** – Equality is the belief that every Singaporean has a fair opportunity to fulfil their potential, regardless of starting point. While people begin from different circumstances, a just society ensures these differences do not become permanent barriers. This commitment has driven Singapore's investments in education, housing, healthcare, and social mobility over the decades – creating pathways for Singaporeans from all backgrounds to progress and contribute. Let us support one another so that every Singaporean has a genuine opportunity to thrive, and no one is left behind.

“This is not a Malay nation; this is not a Chinese nation; this is not an Indian nation. Everyone will have his place, equal: language, culture, religion” – Then-Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew at press conference on 9 Aug 1965 announcing Singapore's separation from Malaysia

Animation: Origins of the Pledge

Tracing the history of the Pledge, the video highlights its core values and ideals, and encourages viewers to reaffirm their commitment to them. Facilitators may play the accompanying video at the end of this slide to emphasise the importance of the Pledge.

References:

- <https://www.mccy.gov.sg/about-us/news-and-resources/unity-and--we-first--mindset-key-for-singapore-to-stay-exceptional-in-a-changed-world>
- https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/files/news/speeches/Transcript_SMS_speech_at_37th_SLR_Annual_Lecture.pdf

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ONE united PEOPLE

From our earliest years, Singapore made a **deliberate choice that diversity would be a source of strength, not division.** This conviction has shaped our policies, institutions, and way of life.

Multiculturalism is not a natural state – it is a daily practice. As our society becomes more diverse and as global forces test social cohesion everywhere, sustaining harmony will require us to continually deepen mutual understanding and broaden our common spaces.



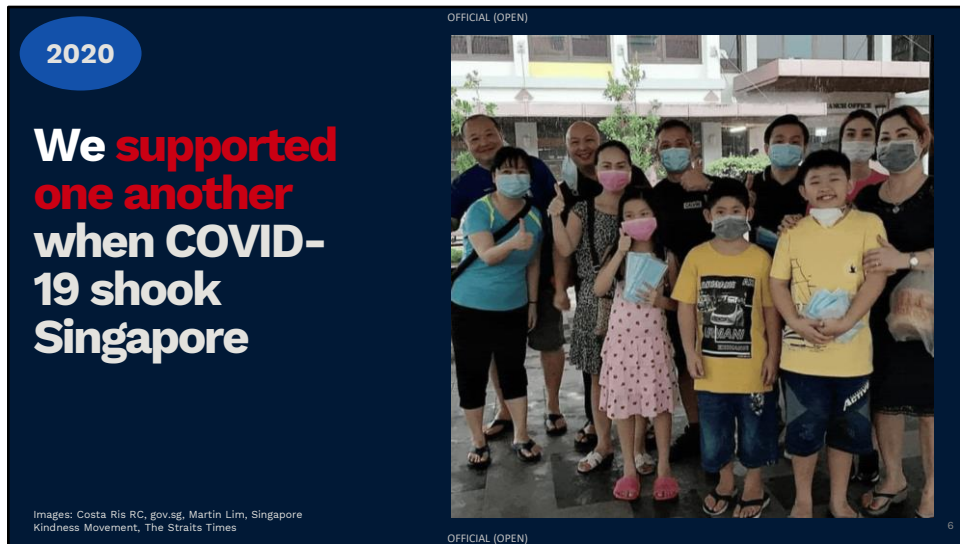
Image: MCCY

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5

The Pledge opens not with "I", but with "We". Our unity has never meant uniformity. At independence, Singapore made a deliberate choice that our **diversity would be a source of strength**, not division. This conviction shaped our policies, our institutions, and the way our communities grew up alongside one another – living, working, and learning side by side in shared spaces.

This is why multiculturalism is not a natural state that takes care of itself. It is a **daily practice** – in the friendships we build across communities, the common spaces we protect, and each community's willingness to compromise for the common good. Every Singaporean is both a **beneficiary and a guardian** of it.



The COVID-19 pandemic was one of the most challenging periods for Singapore in recent history. Our daily lives were disrupted, and many difficult decisions had to be made amid uncertainty and rapidly changing circumstances.

Yet even during this period, **many Singaporeans stepped forward to support one another. Businesses and communities showed care and solidarity:**

- A couple used their own money to buy 6,600 masks to distribute to fellow Singaporeans.
- In many housing estates, residents placed bottles of hand sanitiser in HDB lifts for their neighbours to use.
- Hawker store “Beng Who Cooks” prepared and delivered free meals to those in need.
- Some churches and mosques opened up as temporary shelters under the Ministry of Social and Family Development’s Safe Sound Sleeping Places initiative, providing rough sleepers and homeless persons a safe environment to rest overnight.

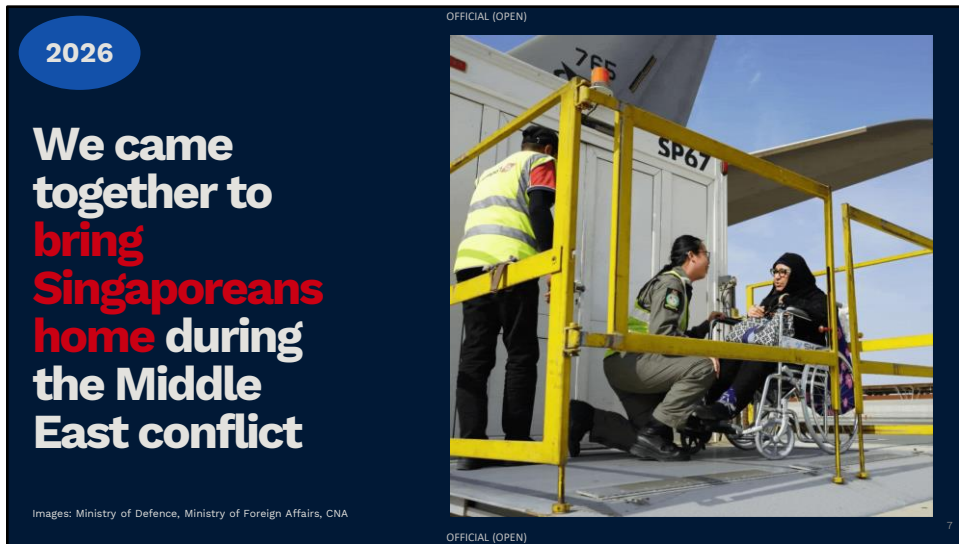
These acts demonstrated the spirit of unity, looking out for one another, and putting the community first “regardless of race, language, or religion”, echoing the values of our Pledge.

Suggested questions to pose to audience:

1. *What other acts of care/support do you recall during COVID-19 or even in everyday life?*
2. *What values of the Pledge do they reflect?*

References:

- COVID-19 White Paper, https://isomer-user-content.by.gov.sg/34/4aba909a-1b28-40b1-ba93-ebe3528881b1/130323_PMO_LoRes_CovidPaper.pdf
- <https://www.sg101.gov.sg/society/case-studies/covid19>
- <https://www.facebook.com/gov.sg/videos/278885310013565>
- <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/network-helped-rough-sleepers-to-find-shelter-at-onset-of-pandemic>
- <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=408481451314345&set=pcb.408483144647509>



When the Middle East conflict disrupted air travel in the region, many Singaporeans were left stranded overseas.

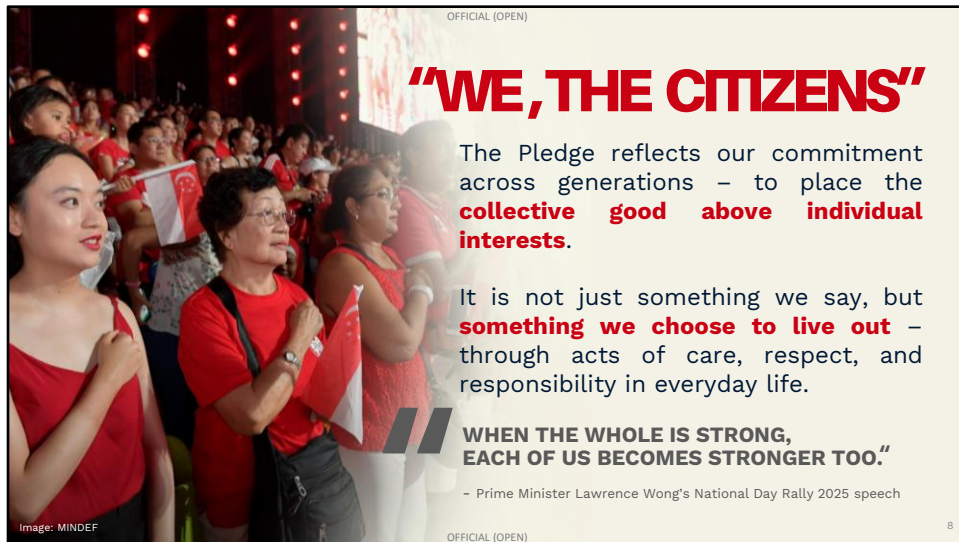
Personnel from different agencies, including government ministries, the Singapore Armed Forces, and Singapore Airlines, worked together around the clock, to coordinate evacuation efforts and ensure the safe return of Singaporeans and their families.

This illustrated the strong sense of responsibility, dedication, and commitment across both public and private sectors to go beyond the call of duty in supporting their fellow Singaporeans who needed help in a war-torn zone. It demonstrates **how we continue to stand by one another in times of crisis as “one united people”, “regardless of race, language, or religion”**.

These efforts were met with heartfelt appreciation from the wider public, reflecting a shared sense of pride and solidarity among Singaporeans.

References:

- <https://www.mindef.gov.sg/news-and-events/latest-releases/13mar26-nr>
- <https://www.mindef.gov.sg/news-and-events/latest-releases/7apr26-pg>
- <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/forum/forum-what-welcome-home-means-to-a-Singaporean-on-board-an-rsaf-evacuation-flight>



We have come a long way from the first recitation of the Pledge in 1966.

Today, becoming a **“We First” society will embody our continued commitment to the values of the Pledge**, as shown in the examples earlier. This means **placing the collective good above individual interests, looking out for one another, and building a shared future despite differences in race, language, or religion.**

When we recite the Pledge, we are reminded to live out its values in our everyday actions – no matter how big or small.

Suggested questions to pose to audience:


1. *The Pledge was written in a very different time, soon after Singapore’s separation from Malaysia. Is it still relevant today, and why?*
2. *What is one thing you can do to practise “We First” in your school, home, or community?*
3. *Can you think of a moment where you had to choose between “me” and “we”? What did you learn from it?*

Reference:

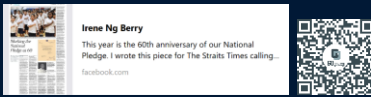
- <https://www.pmo.gov.sg/newsroom/ndr>: *“To keep Singapore going, we must be a “We-First” society. Because if everyone only thinks about “me”, and puts “me” ahead of “we”, then we are finished. Society will fray, and things will fall apart. But if each of us does our part for the “we” – care, contribute, and look out for one another – then the “me” will thrive and flourish too. Because when the whole is strong, each of us becomes stronger too.” – Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, National Day Rally 2025*

Learn more:

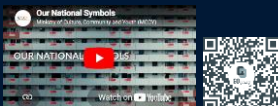
1 **NDP2026 album**




2 **Opinion: Marking the National Pledge at 60**




3 **National Symbols of Singapore**



4 **Play Snake: Pledge Edition**




5 **Visit the Albatross File: A Special Showcase on the Origins of the National Pledge**



Note: Website will be available by 30 Jun 2026 or earlier

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Links:

1. NDP2026 album
 - a) YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/NDPeeps>
 - b) Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/artist/1BhtFoW6keQNCZBQEDFmmT?si=iXyEOKg1Q2KNxDD0iPn8FQ>
2. The Straits Times opinion piece by Irene Ng – Marking the National Pledge at 60: <https://www.facebook.com/irenengph/posts/this-year-is-the-60th-anniversary-of-our-national-pledge-i-wrote-this-piece-for-/34494414520143676>
3. National Symbols of Singapore: <https://go.gov.sg/nationalsymbols>
4. Snake: *Pledge Edition*: <https://pledgesg.lovable.app>
5. The Albatross File: *A special showcase on the origins of the National Pledge*: <https://go.gov.sg/pledge60> (website will be available by 30 Jun 2026 or earlier)