

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**OPENING SPEECH BY PROFESSOR S JAYAKUMAR, AUTHOR OF
'BE AT THE TABLE OR BE ON THE MENU – A SINGAPORE MEMOIR'
AT THE OFFICIAL BOOK LAUNCH AT MINISTRY OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS, WEDNESDAY 6 MAY 2015, 5.00PM**

Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Excellencies and family and friends.

First I wish to thank all of you for honouring me by your presence at this book launch. I especially want to thank Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong not only for readily agreeing to be the guest-of-honour, but also for strongly encouraging my writing this book. He had similarly also encouraged me when I wrote my earlier book, *Diplomacy: A Singapore Experience*.

My motivation for writing this book was my feeling that it is important to record some of the important episodes and events that I experienced in the different ministries and organisations. We are a young nation. We need to build up a collective store of memories of how certain events took place and why we responded in a particular way. These issues will crop up in some shape and form in later years.

As I said in my earlier *Diplomacy* Book: "I hoped senior officers in MFA and other ministries would be spurred to compile such write-ups of similar important episodes before memories fade or records become difficult to trace. It is important for each ministry to build up its store of collective institutional memory of experience" I am really glad to see other writing projects, such as the Little Red Dot books, the brainchild of Tommy Koh.

Although the events and episodes are disparate and span many years when I was in various ministries and organisations, I believe that certain themes and lessons emerge. For example: the need to be prepared for all kinds of contingencies and situations, the importance of having competent officials, the importance of working as a team, in the case of foreign affairs - never to be deterred by the fact that we are a small country - we can still play a role on the world stage.

I have dedicated this book: "To the memory of Lee Kuan Yew who made possible the Singapore Story". I do not think I need to explain to this audience my reason for doing that. When you read the book, it will be clear that he, and the Singapore which he shaped, had a huge impact on my life.

The book should speak for itself and so I do not think I should say much more..

As I did with my previous book, my royalties from this book shall also be donated to MFA's adopted charity, which is now The Rainbow

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Centre, which is doing commendable work for children with special needs.

Finally I wish to thank MFA Diplomatic Academy and SPH for jointly hosting this book launch.