

37TH SINGAPORE LECTURE –

OPENING REMARKS BY DPM THARMAN SHANMUGARATNAM

His Excellency Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India,

Mr Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1 A very warm welcome to the 37th Singapore Lecture. Prime Minister Modi, thank you for agreeing to deliver this lecture during your official visit to Singapore despite your extremely tight schedule.

2 This year, as we celebrate 50 years of nationhood, we also celebrate the friends who have stood by Singapore since its earliest days. India was the second country to establish diplomatic relations with Singapore. It also supported our entry into the United Nations, the Afro-Asian Conference and Non-Aligned Movement at a time when gaining recognition and international legitimacy was critical to a fledgling nation.

Through this deep friendship, we have developed a vibrant and multifaceted relationship over the five decades. Our economic relations are strong, with Singapore being one of the top investors in India today. Our companies are active in sectors relevant to India's development and Prime Minister Modi's priorities, such as urban solutions, infrastructure, aviation, energy, as well as port and logistics. Similarly, many Indian companies have established regional and global operations in Singapore. Our people-to-people relations run deep, as does our cooperation in the defence and cultural spheres.

3 Even as we celebrate the past 50 years, we want to build a partnership for the next 50 years. Tomorrow, the two Prime Ministers will be signing a Strategic Partnership that will not only elevate relations but also chart the way forward in the coming decades. We thank Prime Minister Modi for his firm support for the Strategic Partnership.

Ladies and gentlemen,

4 Prime Minister Modi was born of humble beginnings in Gujarat, a state where he subsequently rose to become its Chief

Minister from 2001 to 2014. During his three terms as Chief Minister, Gujarat's economy nearly tripled in size, benefiting millions of people in the state. He achieved this transformation by improving infrastructure, attracting investment and modernising Gujarat's bureaucracy with his trademark vision, discipline and decisiveness. It became known as 'the Gujarat model'.

5 Since taking office as Prime Minister, Mr Modi has brought the same vigour and drive to the national stage. He has reinvigorated the India "story", launching a number of bold national initiatives such as "Make in India", "100 Smart Cities" and "Skill India" – each seek to address the key challenges and opportunities for India. Countries and companies from around the world are being drawn to India by his commitment to create an open and competitive environment for investments and development.

6 Beyond India, Prime Minister Modi also moved quickly to re-energise its foreign policy, both regionally and globally. Indeed, India has a significant role to play in our region, and its "Act East" policy will be very positively received. We are confident that India will

remain an important stakeholder in the region, and continue to make vital contributions to Southeast Asia and Singapore.

7 It is now my privilege to invite Prime Minister Modi to deliver the 37th Singapore Lecture on the topic “India’s Singapore Story”.

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