



Statement by President S R Nathan

In a few days I will be reaching the age of 87 years. At this stage of my life, I do not believe that I can undertake indefinitely the heavy responsibilities and physical demands of the position of Head of State. I have therefore decided not to seek a third term in office and will step down as President of Singapore.

Over the past 12 years, I have tried to do my best as Head of State in all my duties, whether it be constitutional, ceremonial or community-related. I have gained new insights into the lives of our people in all walks of life – the dispossessed, disabled, and impoverished as well as those able to enjoy the fruits of our economic progress. I have sought public support for various social causes, benefitting the less fortunate. If I have fallen short, I would like the people of Singapore to know that this has not been for lack of effort or commitment. I have tried to do my best.

No doubt I have earned my fair share of criticism. Anyone who takes on public responsibilities has to expect that. I have taken such comments – whether made directly or via social media – as made in good conscience, and well-intended.

At the same time, I have been privileged, from the day I came into office, to receive the goodwill and affection of countless Singaporeans, shown in many ways, both public and private. I will always cherish the memory of my interactions with these Singaporeans – I find difficulty in finding words to describe their affection and kindness.

Whatever the Constitution says about the powers of the Elected President, and however varied people's perceptions of the Office may be, ultimately the welfare of our country and people depends upon the way Singapore is governed and administered. That depends in turn upon the qualities of the men and women elected by the people to Parliament, and on those who take up office in government. I believe that if those who serve in the government or any other area of public administration meet the demands of their office to the best of their ability, and if they show wisdom and integrity in looking after the interests of Singapore, we can ask no more.

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We face a future in which the challenges to our leaders will be different from those in the past, but every bit as substantial. We must all be responsive to constructive criticism. At the same time, whether in the office of President or in the executive arm of government, we will always need people of strong character and vision who resist populist pressures and the temptation to sacrifice the long-term interests of the nation in response to those who merely snipe without having to take responsibility.

To serve as President of Singapore has been an honour. To Singaporeans regardless of race, religion or social status, I owe an eternal debt for the opportunity to do so. I will cherish the memory of my association with them and the deep affection they showered on my wife and me.

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