

S'pore spirit a valuable asset to take nation forward, says Heng

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SINGAPORE – The “Singapore spirit” will be a valuable asset to take the Republic forward, said Education Minister Heng Swee Keat at the Tampines Group Representation Constituency rally yesterday, as he called on Singaporeans to stay united and relevant to the world.

The Singapore spirit — which Mr Heng characterised as one where elected officials work hard, think long-term and engage with fellow Singaporeans to build the country’s future — is especially valuable because Singapore is a “little red dot dealing with big countries ... in a fast-changing, dynamic region”.

“As a tiny red dot, we can be bullied,” said Mr Heng, who is leading the People’s Action Party’s five-man slate for the constituency.

Taking the podium at the field in Ngee Ann Secondary School last

night, he recounted instances when neighbouring countries warned that they would cut off Singapore’s supply of water and rice.

“Now, we have NEWater, and our water technology companies are going all over the world. Isn’t that great,” said Mr Heng, who also cited enhanced standards of housing, education, healthcare and employment as successes worth celebrating in the Republic’s 50th year of independence.

“We have made progress from Third World to First, in one generation. No other newly independent nation was able to do that,” he said. The Singapore spirit of partnership and trust between elected officials and Singaporeans will sustain this progress, he said.

Mr Heng also spoke about the Singapore spirit enshrined in education policies here, a topic close to his heart. Reiterating his ministry’s vision to “help every child succeed”, Mr Heng said: “Every child in Singapore is a child of Singapore. I want every child

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Mr Heng Swee Keat
EDUCATION MINISTER,
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PAP’S FIVE-MAN SLATE
FOR TAMPINES GRC

... to succeed, to be better than us.”

The Education Ministry is “serious and deeply committed” about making every school a good school, said Mr Heng, who said principals and teachers share good practices across institutions.

Recognising that every child is different, the Education Ministry has also broadened the areas where students can excel, including non-academic subjects like sports and the arts. The number of Edusave Awards for Achievement, Good Leadership and Service has also been expanded to encourage children to take leadership positions and develop “soft skills”.

He also cited the SkillsFuture movement as a move to expand pathways to various education institutions and encourage apprenticeship.

The Republic’s fifth university, Singapore Institute of Technology, and new degree programmes at the SIM University will also allow more students to pursue undergraduate education, Mr Heng said.

Financial assistance schemes have also been expanded to ensure that no child is denied education because of financial reasons. Institutes of Education students who come from poor families not only have their fees fully paid for, they also get an allowance, Mr Heng noted.

But Mr Heng stressed that a good education does not guarantee a good job and a good life. “If Singapore fails, our children have to find opportunity elsewhere. But as a little red dot, if we stay united, we can show the world what we can do. We can create opportunities for our people,” he said.

In his speech, which was delivered in Malay, Mandarin and English, Mr Heng also paid tribute to founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, who died in March, and to the pioneer leaders. “They fought for a multi-racial society, and a fair and just society. For Singaporeans to determine our own fate, to achieve happiness, prosperity and progress, together.”