



PM Lee carrying one-year-old Gugesan Selvananthen at the ceremony. With them are (from left) the boy's father Selvananthen Krishnan, 41, mother Valli Samugam, 36, and grandmother Thanam Ramasamy, 64. ST PHOTO: NURIA LING

PM Lee kicks off N-Day at Pathlight

■ BY ANDREA ONG

PRIME Minister Lee Hsien Loong kicked off National Day bright and early yesterday morning with an observance ceremony at Pathlight School for his Teck Ghee ward.

It was the first time the yearly event was held at a special education school. Pathlight is a school for children with autism.

This was done in the spirit of being inclusive, said organising chairman and grassroots leader Fadzil Mustapha, 35.

More than 1,000 residents and students joined PM Lee, who is a Member of Parliament for Ang

Mo Kio GRC, in celebrating the nation's 46th birthday.

They sang the national anthem and National Day songs, recited the Pledge and watched performances by schools in Teck Ghee, including a cheerleading item by 20 pupils from Pathlight School.

PM Lee also received a black-and-white ink drawing of traditional shophouses in Joo Chiat, done by Pathlight School student Glenn Phua, 15.

The school's principal Linda Kho, 52, said: "Celebrating National Day, which is about the Singapore spirit and nation building, in a special education school is significant because it shows we are moving towards a kinder, gen-

tlar and more inclusive society."

PM Lee also took time to chat with residents and new citizens at the event, a day after his National Day message in which he rallied Singaporeans to look ahead and pull together despite global economic uncertainties and a downward revision of Singapore's growth projection.

Said technical support officer Yap Chu Yong, 50, who was there with his wife and five-year-old daughter: "Cost of living here is high, and the economic problems in Europe and the United States will affect us. But I believe Singapore can pull through. We have gone through so many tough years together."