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PLEASE EMBARGO TILL AFTER DELIVERY

SPEECH BY MR YATIMAN YUSOF, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND THE ARTS AND MP FOR TAMPINES GRC, AT THE SIM PRESENTATION CEREMONY FOR UNIVERSITY OF LONDON PROGRAMMES ON 1 APR 99 AT 2.30 PM AT THE RAFFLES BALLROOM,

THE WESTIN STAMFORD AND WESTIN PLAZA

Professor Graham Zellik, Vice-Chancellor of the University of London,

Mr Ho Kwon Ping, Chairman of the SIM Governing Council,

Graduates, Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good afternoon.

Today is indeed a proud and special occasion for the UOL faculty, SIM staff, graduates and especially, their families. The attainment of the UOL degree at SIM marks a significant achievement for all involved in the various degree programmes. For the graduates, I believe, it is the fulfilment of two to three years of continuous hard work, striking a balance between studies, work and family commitments. For your families, it is the culmination of their sacrifices and understanding in helping you, the graduates, through your study programmes. The faculty and staff who have taught, served and helped you through your programmes also feel proud to have contributed to your achievements.

Therefore, my point today is a fairly simple one. The success of an individual is never an isolated event. Yes, he or she needs to work hard, make sacrifices and persevere through all the odds. However, the person requires support from the larger realm of society, family and friends. The success of Singapore has and continues to be the result of commitment from every generation, race as well as people from different academic and professional backgrounds. Your individual success is not purely the result of your competitive spirit, intelligence and drive, but also an outcome of the cooperation amongst yourselves.

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There are however, signs that success and achievement have increasingly become more narrowly defined, as if an achievement is purely the result of one person's effort and ingenuity alone. Worse still is the mentality that one man's gain is another man's loss. Therefore, the jealousy and covetousness of a neighbour's or friend's wealth begin to create walls between individuals.

Many signs show that this is the age of the individual. Marketers and management gurus speak of the age of 'one-to-one' marketing and relationship building. These are signs that in a medium like the Internet or in marketing of consumer products, money and effort are increasingly geared towards satisfying every whim and fancy of the individual. Individualism is becoming a powerful force in today's very open market. The individual's lifestyles, preferences, beliefs and desires are all-important in marketing. The real danger is that the individual becomes highly commoditised and detached from the past and the present. This is the path that carries the real risk of alienating the individual from the society.

Your achievement of a degree signals a certain maturity of your academic and intellectual potential and should be seen as such, rather than as the attainment of social status, as a graduate. That is to say, a bachelor's degree is but the beginning of continuing personal and professional development. After all, your success in career and family has been and will be determined as such by the help and support you receive from friends, associates and partners, as through your intelligence and drive to succeed.

In the age of globalisation, no man can be king unto himself. We have seen in the past couple of years, a large number of corporate mergers between former business "enemies" and cooperation amongst formerly warring states. The realisation that another man's suffering can result in your suffering is made all the more evident in an increasingly open and accessible global economy. The "Asian" contagion reminds us of the complex weave of the global economy, where currencies, trade and people move across boundaries in a matter of days, hours, even minutes.

In Singapore, our size and our continuous struggle for survival dictate that we always have to be conscious of these forces and be able to balance the trends in the world at large with those in our country, and between the needs of the society and those of the individual. As a degree holder, your responsibility towards social development and economic prosperity is even greater. A degree opens doors and, with sufficient hard work and initiative, it will gain you access to ever higher management rungs. With the higher appointments, come greater responsibilities to the social and cultural development in Singapore. A sense of the larger goals in the society and within various cultural areas will enable you to make sensitive, well-considered decisions.

I believe most of us have a higher, perhaps more noble, vision than what we do everyday. A vision that extends simply beyond a degree and a well-paying job. Many degree holders I know will testify to the fact that a job is a means to an end. So are a condominium and other seemingly desirable objects of wealth. At the end of the day, you still have to satisfy your spiritual hunger and your need to belong.

Our aim to develop Singapore into an arts and cultural centre in the region and the world, testifies to our awareness that something needs to be done to

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counterbalance the sense of growing self-aggrandisement. Arts and cultural activities tap into your spiritual, psychological, cultural and social roots. It places you in context and helps you understand your links with the past, the present, and your place in society and the future.

Contrary to encouraging pure individuality, art encourages an openness to receive, perceive and accept another's point of view, as well as another's cultural experiences. Like the forces of globalisation, the arts have crossed various political, social and economic boundaries. International arts festivals bring in audiences from worldwide. Our very own arts festivals are no exception.

We do not want Singapore to just become a regional centre for the arts. Our ultimate goal must be the contribution to the development of a deeper and broader sense of Singaporeans' place in this society and Singapore's place in the eyes (and heart) of the world. This can come about only when the more active and vibrant sections of society, people like yourselves who are degree holders, take a more concerted role in support of artistic and cultural ventures in and beyond Singapore.

Therefore, even in the midst of financial uncertainties, we have to look into the heart-ware, as the cohesion, belonging and rootedness are probably our best bet staying together and helping each other out of difficulties. I therefore urge you to find time to become part of the civic, artistic and cultural scene that is fast developing in Singapore. Benefits from the arts may not always be material but the ties the arts create will be lasting.

With these words, I would like to thank both the SIM and the UOL for inviting me to address this auspicious occasion. I heartily congratulate the faculty and staff, the graduates, their families and friends, and wish today's graduates a fresh and vibrant start to a challenging career ahead.

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