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SPEECH BY MR LEE YOCK SUAN, MINISTER FOR INFORMATION & THE ARTS AND MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, AT THE LAUNCH OF "SINGAPORE:

A PICTORIAL HISTORY 1819-2000" AND THE MILLENNIUM TIME CAPSULE AT CITY HALL CHAMBERS ON 12 NOVEMBER 99 AT 7.30PM

1 The City Hall is a most appropriate venue for this evening's function. It is steeped in history. Here in 1945, in this chamber of the then Municipal Building, World War II officially ended for Singapore when Admiral Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Commander, South East Asia Command, accepted the Japanese surrender from General Itagaki.

2 On the afternoon of 5 June 1959, having won the Legislative Assembly elections, PAP leaders took their oaths here to form Singapore's first fully elected Government. Six years later, in 1965, on the steps of the City Hall, then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew declared Singapore an independent republic.

3 In September 1996, during a Teachers Day Rally, Prime Minister Goh referred to a Ministry of Education survey which revealed that younger Singaporeans did not know enough of Singapore's recent history. Subsequently, a major effort was launched to ensure that National Education became a vital component of our education process. In mid-1998, the National Education Exhibition was held. The launch this evening of the publication by my Ministry and the National Heritage Board (NHB) entitled Singapore: A Pictorial History, 1819-2000 is yet another step in this process.

4 This book was inspired by the Prime Minister's observation made during a visit to the Luxembourg City Museum in Brussels in late 1996 where he touched on the

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value of documenting Singapore's transformation from a sleepy fishing village to a modern metropolis.

5 As a small country, we will always be concerned with our water supply and our national security. The bottomline is that no one owes us a living. Building a sense and appreciation of our own history and origins is important as one line of defence. We need to find interesting ways of getting Singaporeans to be aware of our past. Knowing our history is part and parcel of being a Singaporean. Our history is our national memory through which we make sense of our present.

6 I am cheered by indications of a growing interest amongst Singaporeans in our history and the legacy of our past. The public has responded enthusiastically to the recent Civic District Heritage Trail launched by NHB jointly with several other agencies. Some 5000 people turned up in the morning to cover a trail through the oldest parts of Singapore. Singaporeans care about their heritage and retain emotional bonds to the places which were at some point very much a part of their lives.

7 Singapore: A Pictorial History, 1819-2000 is a welcome addition to the collection of works on Singapore history. This collection of photographs and pictures painstakingly put together, including faded pencil sketches, watercolours and engravings, capture vivid glimpses of our past. It is a fascinating visual history of Singapore and includes pictures never published before, many taken from the National Archives and the Singapore History Museum and from private collections locally and abroad.

8 Mrs Gretchen Liu was commissioned by MITA and the NHB to compile the book and I commend her for her devotion and personal fascination with the subject, seen also in her earlier publications. She has done an excellent job and I would recommend the book to all readers interested in our history. I am happy to launch the book today.

9 It has been designated a Millennium Book and will be the first item to be placed in the millennial time capsule, which I am also launching today. The capsule will be sealed on 31 December and buried in the grounds of the Singapore History Museum. It will contain significant artefacts reflecting life in Singapore at the close of the 20th century. The NHB has solicited ideas from the public on what should be included in this time capsule. When it is finally unearthed and opened in 2050, it will provide an interesting insight into Singapore at the turn of the millennium.

10 In launching the Millennium Book and the time capsule today, I take this opportunity to wish Singapore and all Singaporeans continuing success and prosperity in the new millennium.