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Singapore Government

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SPEECH BY MR YATIMAN YUSOF, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY OF MINISTRY OF
INFORMATION AND THE ARTS, AT THE

GRAND FINALE OF NAFA ARTS FESTIVAL '99 AT

WTC EXPO GATEWAY ON FRIDAY,

21 MAY 99 AT 6.30 PM

I am pleased to join you this evening for the grand finale of NAFA Arts Festival '99. As the five-week long arts festival comes to a close tonight, we are marking another milestone for NAFA with the School of Visual Arts Graduation Show 99.

For the first time, 315 students are graduating tonight from the School of Visual Arts. 15 of them are from the first batch of Fine Art degree programme jointly run with the Curtin University of Technology, while another 11 students will be awarded their Bachelor of Arts in Design from the University of Western Sydney Nepean.

Another 280 or more students will be graduating with Diploma in Visual
Communication, Interior Design or Fine Art.

I have also been informed that there are more than 2,000 creative works on display tonight. The works were produced by these graduating students who have received three or four years of art education in NAFA.

I would like to congratulate all of them who have worked so hard to earn their respective diplomas and degrees. I am impressed with their capabilities to create such high quality works. I must also take this opportunity to compliment NAFA on its unflinching efforts in nurturing and cultivating creative talents for our local arts scene.

After all, NAFA was where most first and second-generation Singapore artists had

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either taught or studied. They included the late pioneer painters Chen Wen Hsi, Cheong Soon Pi eng, Chen Chong Swee and Georgette Chen. Second generation artists comprised Thomas Yeo, Ng Eng Teng, Choo Keng Kwang, Chua Mi a Tee and many more.

NAFA's role in the local art circle is becoming increasingly important as the government takes a more pro-active stand in developing Singapore into a renaissance city in the knowledge era.

In continuing its investment in tertiary art education, the government has shown the growing importance of artistic manpower in our future economy.

The government's funding for NAFA students will now be on par with those of polytechnics and the launch of the Institute of the Arts at NUS will not only enhance the tertiary-education in the arts, it will also encourage more people to join the creative professions. In the long run, this will increase the vibrancy of our economy.

We need workers who possess both tangible and intangible skills in our future economy. This is because creativity and imagination add intangible value to tangible products. The arts play a crucial role in nurturing this crucial element of creativity and imagination.

As the graduating students make preparations for their career or further education, I hope they will remember to make their contributions to our art community.

At the same time, I urge NAFA to persevere in its commendable work in art education.

In conclusion, I am pleased to declare the NAFA Arts Festival '99 closed, and congratulations once again to all graduates for the successful completion of their studies.

Thank you.

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