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Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by Mr Lim Swee Say, 27 Jan 2000, 8.00 pm

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, #36-00 PSA Building, 460 Alexandra Road,
Singapore 119963. Tel: 3757794/5

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**SPEECH BY MR LIM SWEE SAY, MINISTER OF STATE FOR
COMMUNICATIONS & IT AND TRADE & INDUSTRY
AT THE APPROVED INTERNATIONAL FAIR (AIF)
AWARD PRESENTATION 2000
27 Jan 2000, 8 pm, Pacific Ballroom, Pan Pacific Hotel**

Distinguished guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Growth of the Exhibitions Industry

1. I remember a time when exhibitions were staged in make shift booths in car parks and converted warehouses at the World Trade Centre. Today, we have state of the art exhibition and convention facilities at the Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre and the Singapore Expo. The completion of the Singapore Expo, which will officially open in April this year, has boosted our quality exhibition space to more than 100,000 sqm. The exhibition industry has indeed come a long way.

2. Much of this progress can be attributed to the growing interest in the fast expanding markets in the Asia Pacific. With the entrance of leading international

organisers over the years, we are seeing more quality trade fairs being customised for the Asia Pacific region. This has helped to create a more vibrant exhibition industry here in Singapore.

3. The government has also played its part to help nurture the growth of the exhibition industry. For example, the TDB launched the Approved International Fair (AIF) 10 years ago to promote and recognise outstanding events held in Singapore. The AIF logo has gained acceptance as a mark of excellence in the international business community. It serves as a useful benchmark for foreign participants to identify leading events to attend in the region. So far, 21 events have been accorded the AIF awards. I am told that six of them, namely Asian Aerospace, Food & Hotel Asia, CommunicAsia, GlobalTRONICS, Pumps & Systems Asia, and International Furniture Fair Singapore, have the potential to grow even bigger to become mega fairs of international stature. I congratulate the organisers of these events, and hope that more will join the league soon.

The International Exhibition City Programme (IECP)

4. Notwithstanding the progress we have made so far, by and large, the EMS industry is still in its early stage of development. Having identified the exhibition industry as one of the key sectors to develop in the coming years, our vision is to develop Singapore into a leading International Exhibition City. To this end, the TDB launched the International Exhibition City Programme, or IEC Programme in short, in July 1997, about two and a half years ago. The IEC Programme comprises a basket of incentives, including event endorsement and marketing assistance, which companies can tap.

5. The IEC Programme has been well received by the industry. It has helped to nurture the growth of a critical mass of trade fairs for the regional markets. So far, 55 international trade fairs have been endorsed under the IEC Programme in the past 2 years. These events generated about \$500 million in economic spin-offs to Singapore. Some of them have achieved wide international appeal, with 17 out of the 50 international trade fairs endorsed by UFI in Asia Pacific held in Singapore.

6. Our goal is to endorse 100 events under the IEC Programme by the Year 2005, generating more than \$700m in economic spin-offs to the Singapore economy. With the expansion in exhibition space and the recovery of the Asian

economy, I am hopeful that we can meet these targets.

Manpower and Standards Development

7. To sustain the growth of the Exhibition industry, the development of quality manpower is an important issue. We need to continue to expand and upgrade the pool of talent here with the expertise and knowledge to handle major exhibition events.

8. I am pleased to learn that the TDB and the industry are working with international organisations on educational exchange programmes. Such programmes will allow us to learn the latest industry practices from global leaders in exhibitions, and build closer ties with them.

9. We must also examine our industry standards to make sure that they meet international levels. I am glad that the Singapore Standards Council has endorsed a proposal by TDB and PSB to develop the Technical Standards References for this industry. We must continue to benchmark ourselves against international standards so that we can be globally competitive.

Technology Innovation – Virtual Exhibitions

10. Another important area is the use of Information Communication Technology, ICT in short, in the industry. The rapid advances of the technology have clearly changed the way exhibitions will be conducted in the future. Many of you are expanding your presence in the cyberspace, and revamping your websites to enhance your product offerings. I would not be surprised if some of you are already venturing into the realm of virtual exhibitions as you expand your market reach.

11. On the part of the government, we will continue to encourage and facilitate the creation of innovative products and services to ensure that the Singapore economy will come out tops in this Internet revolution. TDB will launch an IEC website by next month. Once up, we will be able to reach out to the global business community, and welcome them to our showroom, at a single click of the mouse.

Conclusion

12. There are many challenges ahead of us. The rewards are tremendous too if we are able to innovate and move fast. The AIF Award is a symbol of what the

industry and the government agencies can achieve together, by partnering for success. I would like to congratulate the TDB and the Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers (SACEOS) for your joint efforts in putting together this award ceremony. I would also like to congratulate all our AIF Award recipients. I applaud your vision and energy. Working together, I am confident that we can make Singapore one of the world's leading International Exhibition Cities in the Asia Pacific. Thank you.

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