

To:
cc: (bcc: NHB NASReg/NHB/SINGOV)
Subject: (Embargoed) Speech by Mr Lee Yock Suan, 29 May 2000, 2.30 PM.

Singapore Government

MEDIA RELEASE

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, 140 Hill Street #02-02 MITA Building
Singapore 179369. Tel: 837 9666

EMBARGO INSTRUCTIONS

The attached press release/speech is **EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY**.
Please check against delivery.
For assistance call 837 9666

SPRInter 4.0, Singapore's Press Releases on the Internet, is located at:
<http://www.gov.sg/sprinter/>

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY
PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

SPEECH BY MR LEE YOCK SUAN, MINISTER FOR INFORMATION AND THE ARTS & MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, AT THE OPENING OF THE 10TH CREATIVE ARTS SEMINAR ON 29 MAY 2000 AT 2.30PM AT THE NUS THEATRETTE LT13

National Archives of Singapore

I am pleased to be here once again at the opening of the Creative Arts Programme, now in its 10th year.

2 Since 1982, eight years ago when I was last here, the regional political and economic landscape has altered significantly. Strong economic growth of the early to mid 1990s was abruptly interrupted by the severe financial crisis of 1997-98. The resulting economic turmoil has led to the downfall of President Suharto in Indonesia. Although the regional economies have recovered more quickly than expected, many problems remain to be resolved.

3 On a global setting, the sense of doom and gloom during the financial crisis has given way to relief and even euphoria as stock markets have been propelled to new heights by the excitement over technology stocks. Technology is advancing at an increasing pace. The Internet has emerged as a force to be reckoned with, and its tentacles extend not only to the economy but also to the way our society and our individual lives are organised.

4 With this backdrop and as we stand at the threshold of a new millennium, it is fitting for us to ponder what the 21st century holds for us. We cannot foretell the future, but we can expect the future to be very different from the past. We enjoyed decades of robust economic growth by effective management of our factors of production and tapping on the collective energies of our people. The New Economy will demand that we continue to do this and more. We will need to possess the ability to create value through new knowledge, new ideas and innovations.

5 Creativity will move into the centre of our economic life because it is a critical component of a nation's ability to compete internationally. The arts plays an important part in the fostering of creativity. It trains the individual to "think out of the box", to see things from fresh perspectives and to appreciate the aesthetics of a product or concept, not just its functionality. Interestingly, the most up-to-date developments in fields like engineering, architecture and science are described as being "state-of-the-art".

6 We will need this culture of creativity and innovation to permeate the lives of Singaporeans. Our education system is gearing up for this challenge. We need to encourage the appreciation and practice of the arts and creativity in our education system. Recently, we have made progress at tertiary level, where Government has decided to significantly increase infrastructure and recurrent funding for LaSalle SIA College of the Arts and Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. Increasingly there is a need, and a brighter economic future for, artists in our society.

7 Arts education should begin early, in a sustained and systematic way, as soon as a child enters school or even before that. A number from each cohort

will then be better able to fulfil their potential as artists. More importantly, the majority, who may not become practising artists, will be imbued with that aesthetic sensibility and imaginative bent which have become an increasingly critical life skill in this age.

8 Initiatives such as the Creative Arts Programme contribute to this thrust to promote the arts and arts education in Singapore. The programme has nurtured participants who have gone on to publish and gain recognition in the arts. I do not expect that many of you will go on to become full-time poets or playwrights. We have a small talent base and your talents are also required in other fields. However, whatever it is that you choose to apply yourself to, the ability to tap your creative energies and your sense of imagination will be an asset. In other words, whether you are a lawyer, a computer programmer, a technopreneur, a teacher or a caregiver, the sensibilities that you acquire in the arts will stand you in good stead.

9 In the New Economy, the ingredients for career or business success will increasingly shift from such qualities as discipline, system, order and productivity - qualities Singapore is often known for - to other qualities such as creativity, lateral thinking and a questioning spirit. To make a living in a globalised and highly competitive world, we have to rely more on our powers of imagination and original thought. In fact, we may have to do less and think more to come up with refreshing new ideas and innovations.

10 Singapore must aspire to be a global city with a creative buzz, a kind of energy that takes pride in originality, and makes us a compelling place to live, work and play in. This will result in an environment conducive to creative and knowledge-based industries, and to new talent from here and anywhere else in the world.

11 At the same time, as we plug into a globalised environment, we must invest in our cultural resources to help us in our nation-building efforts. To deepen our sense of identity and belonging, and to foster shared feelings and perspectives, we need to strengthen the Singapore Heartbeat through the creation and sharing of Singapore stories. We need our own storytellers and cultural heroes, like Pan Shou and Catherine Lim.

12 We must promote the arts for the sake of the arts, for the sake of the New Economy, and also for the sake of nation building. These aspirations can only be possible with widespread public support and participation as well as sponsorship by patrons of the arts like Singapore Press Holdings, which has been a major sponsor of the Creative Arts Programme since 1991.

13 Several writers and artists have also invested much time and effort to share their love for the arts with participants. These include Professor Edwin Thumboo, Professor Lee Tzu Pheng, Miss Ho Poh Fun and Miss Heng Siok Tian. I thank them for their contributions.

14 For the writers amongst you who are keen to seek further opportunities to hone your craft beyond the Creative Arts Programme, the National Arts Council has recently introduced the Mentor Access Project. This is a one-year mentorship programme where budding writers are matched with their peers. During the mentorship period, you will be able to share your work-in-progress with these writers for their comments and tap on their experience and advice as you find your own voice.

15 In the meantime, I urge you to take full advantage of the programme lined up for you this week. I wish all of you an enjoyable and fulfilling seminar.

National Archives of Singapore