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**SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
MINISTER FOR LAW OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE,
PROFESSOR S JAYAKUMAR,
AT THE LAUNCH OF CONTACT SINGAPORE LOS ANGELES,
THE RITZ CARLTON HOTEL, PASADENA,
CALIFORNIA, USA, AT 6.30 PM, 19 NOVEMBER 1997**

I'm happy to be here today in LA, a vibrant city pulsating with entrepreneurial spirit and a rich arts and entertainment scene.

Many associate LA with Hollywood. But beneath the Hollywood glitter, LA is also a hub of hi-tech research and creativity. Silicon Valley, just north of LA, has long been the technological cradle of US innovation in high-tech. You have a great number of talented and ambitious entrepreneurs who have pioneered and grown small businesses into multi-national corporations.

Indeed, the city of LA with your numerous hi-tech industries is a model for Singapore's own development blue-print. Under our IT 2000 vision, we plan to transform Singapore into an intelligent island, propelling the city-state to new heights of technology. We want Singapore to become a global centre of excellence for science and technology, a high value-added location for production and a critical strategic node in the global information network.

Why is LA a centre of excellence for high-tech? The answer lies in its people - the diverse and cosmopolitan mix of talent coming all over the world together to power its economy with shared ideas, experiences and expertise. More than ten ethnic groups reside in LA, many of them immigrants. Silicon Valley is made up of 40 per cent immigrant talent. This clearly shows that a gathering of different minds, from different backgrounds, can provide the spark for creativity.

Singapore is also an immigrant society. For Singapore to keep its competitive edge, we also must continue to attract the world's talent to our shores. This explains this evening. Singapore wants to extend a very warm invitation to the rich and diverse student and professional talent here in Los Angeles, California, and the entire West Coast to come to Singapore to share with us your knowledge, experience and skills.

You may ask what does Singapore, a small tropical island of no more than 250 square miles with no natural resources, have to offer to foreign professionals and students? We may be small, but our economic importance far outstrips what our physical size would suggest. It may surprise you to learn that Singapore is the eighth largest export market for the US. The US exported more to Singapore last year than to the larger countries of China and France. Singapore has been consistently ranked in the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report as one of the most competitive economies in the world.

There are plenty of opportunities in Singapore in a diverse range of industries which require foreign professionals and their skill, expertise, and experience. These include wafer fabrication, wireless communications, chemical engineering, web publishing, computer animation and graphics,

information technology, broadcasting and media production. You will benefit from the attractive career options and financial rewards, the opportunities to pioneer new fields of work, and the educational vistas that Singapore offers. More importantly, you will gain from the invaluable experience of working in Asia, develop an in-depth understanding of Asia and build an Asian network of contacts.

For Americans living on the West Coast, I believe you will be even more aware of the opportunities in Asia since the economies of the West Coast states are inextricably linked to those of Asia. Singapore, for example, is California's sixth largest export market.

Americans are no strangers to Singapore. There are more than 11,000 Americans who live and work in Singapore and they form the second largest foreign community in Singapore. This is the result of the very close ties between Singapore and the United States. The US is Singapore's largest trading partner and also its largest foreign investor. Of the 5,000 multinational corporations based in Singapore, about 1,200 are American companies, many of them using Singapore as their regional headquarters to run multi-million dollar Asian operations. The American companies in Singapore include the giants of corporate America such as Exxon, Mobil, GE, Hewlett-Packard, Citibank, American Express, Seagate, General Motors and a host of others.

The large American presence in Singapore should come as no surprise, given that Singapore is probably the easiest city for westerners, used to the comforts of modern living at home, to make their transition into Asia. Singapore combines the best of western conveniences and eastern cultures, customs and food. We have an efficient transport system, world-class telecommunications and infrastructure, health and recreational facilities. We

are cosmopolitan, multi-cultural and multi-religious with many races living and working together, using English as the main language both at work and in school.

Last year, Fortune Magazine ranked Singapore as the third most easy and pleasant international city to live in, after Toronto and London, but ahead of Paris and Hong Kong. Singapore is also fast emerging as a regional hub for the arts and culture. There are plans to further develop our city's civic district of museums, concert halls and theatres, and an entertainment district just like New York's Broadway.

Tonight, we want to invite you to be part of our CONTACT SINGAPORE initiative that helps foreign professionals and students take advantage of the career and educational opportunities in Singapore. This initiative is also aimed at assisting Singaporeans who are studying or working overseas return to work in Singapore. I am delighted to be here tonight to launch the Los Angeles chapter of this global initiative. The LA centre forms part of a worldwide network of six centres. The other five are in Sydney, Perth, Boston, London and Vancouver.

The CONTACT SINGAPORE initiative is Singapore's way of recognising and capitalising on the rising mobility of talent as the world becomes a global village in which borders are fast disappearing. It is a recognised fact that professionals move from country to country, to wherever their skills take them, and to where their talent and contributions are recognised and well rewarded.

CONTACT SINGAPORE wants to tap the expertise of this group of highly mobile talent to help make Singapore a truly open, global and

cosmopolitan city of the 21st century. We hope that when you consider working in Asia, you will seriously consider Singapore. You will be warmly welcomed and most important of all, you will not regret it.

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