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Subject: Speech by Mr Yatiman Yusof, 1 Jul 98, 8 pm

# Singapore Government PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY MR YATIMAN YUSOF, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR INFORMATION AND THE ARTS AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR TAMPINES GRC, AT THE WELCOMING DINNER FOR THE 1998 SWITZERLAND-SINGAPORE YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAMME AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE SOCIETY, GUILD HOUSE ON WEDNESDAY, 1 JUL 98 AT 8.00 PM**

It is indeed a pleasure for me to join you this evening to welcome the third Swiss Youth Delegation to Singapore.

May I take this opportunity to extend a very warm welcome to our Swiss friends and I hope that you will have a pleasant and fruitful stay in Singapore.

Switzerland is situated in the Alps, a mountainous region in temperate Europe. Singapore, on the other hand, is situated in the lowland tropics. Their climate and landscapes are vastly different. Yet both share the humanly dream of achieving the highest achievable. Both aspire to give their respective citizens a high standard of living. Switzerland has achieved it, Singapore is working hard towards reaching the Swiss standard of living.

Thus, tonight's event is of great significance in that it is the gathering of young people with shared objectives.

For the National Youth Achievement Award Council, it is a great opportunity for them in their continuous effort of building a warm and close relationship, not only between the youths of Singapore and Switzerland, but also between our two countries.

The NYAA Council has sent four youth delegations to Switzerland in 1994, 1995, 1997 and 1998 with the kind and generous sponsorships of the Swiss Business Association, Singapore and Swiss companies in Singapore, in particular, Mr W E Huber, Group Chairman, Boncafe International Pte Ltd.

These visits provided opportunities for our youths to learn more about the country and to observe its systems, for instance, the country's political, educational and military system, its civil defence, transportation, as well as its stand on environmental protection.

After visiting Switzerland, I am sure they now better understand why the Government of Singapore used Switzerland as a model for our country to emulate.

I understand the NYAA Council is setting up the Singapore-Switzerland Youth Exchange Programme Alumni to create opportunities for the reunion of former youth exchange participants in order to promote lasting friendship, understanding and goodwill. I am sure this is a step in the right direction as the Alumni will not only benefit the youths of Singapore but also the Swiss youths as well.

I also understand that the recent Singapore youth delegation to Switzerland has benefited much from their visit. The Swiss have gone out of their way to make the visit interesting and beneficial.

The Singapore youths were very honoured to have the opportunity to meet His Excellency, Mr Falvio Cotti, President of Switzerland in Bern, the Education Minister and Members of Parliament. They also visited a military camp and were given the opportunity to ride on your tanks. They were also given the opportunity to view the spectacular Swiss Alps from helicopters by courtesy of the Swiss Air Force. This must have thrilled them immensely.

The group also visited many Swiss companies and met up with their top executives. They also attended the International Management Symposium in St Gallen.

On this end, I understand that the NYAA Council has also planned a very comprehensive programme for you during your stay in Singapore.

The programmes vary from visitation to our polytechnic to political briefings by one of our Members of Parliament, Mr Hawazi Daipi during the "Meet-the People session" at Sembawang GRC. This will give you an insight on how our politicians tackle the tasks of meeting the people's needs.

The NYAA Council has also made special arrangements for you to meet the Minister for Communications, Mr Mah Bow Tan and attend the Singapore Youth Festival at the National Stadium.

One of the highlights of this year's programme is the Singapore-Switzerland Youth Business Forum to be held at the Guild Hall at this same venue.

During the forum, topics such as "Globalisation and how young people prepare themselves for entry into the business world" will be discussed. One of the most important topics of the forum is addressed to the youth of today, "How to develop entrepreneurial spirit among our young people".

I wish you a fruitful discussion with our youth during the forum.

In conclusion, I must congratulate the Swiss Business Association Singapore, especially Boncafe International Pte Ltd for taking a keen interest in our youth development work and providing financial support for the 1998 Switzerland-Singapore Youth Exchange Programme and the Swiss Embassy in Singapore for providing the support for such an exchange. Your effort is indeed commendable.

I would also like to commend the National Youth Achievement Award Council for their active role in youth development work and in promoting international youth exchanges.

Last but not least, may I once again wish our Swiss friends a pleasant stay in Singapore and I am sure our Singaporean hosts will take good care of you.

Thank you.