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Subject: Speech by PM Goh Chok Tong, 15 Jun, 2.30 pm (Seoul time)

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY MR GOH CHOK TONG, PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE, AT THE PRESENTATION OF THE KEY OF FORTUNE AND CERTIFICATE OF HONORARY CITIZEN OF SEOUL CITY, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, ON TUESDAY, 15 JUNE 1999 AT 2.30 PM

Your Excellency Mayor Koh Kun

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

National Archives of Singapore

Thank you for the warm welcome extended to my delegation and me. It is a great honour for me and Singapore to receive the Key of Fortune and Certificate of Honorary Citizen of Seoul City.

Seoul is a city of many faces. It is not only the political, commercial and financial centre of modern Korea but also the heartland of Korea's traditional culture. Seoul has been the capital city since the first Emperor of the Yi Dynasty moved to this strategic location in 1392. The central position that Seoul assumes in the politics and power of the country has persisted to this day.

My wife and I have been charmed by Seoul and its people. In the midst of modern skyscrapers and broad walkways, well-preserved century-old palaces, gardens and city gates adorn the city. These provide glimpses of Seoul's rich historical legacy.

It is perhaps this charm that draws a growing number of tourists from Singapore to Korea. Last year, despite the economic crisis, more than 90,000 Singapore tourists visited Korea. I am told that flights from Singapore to Seoul during our June school holidays have been fully booked, and that there is a long waiting list!

As the gateway to Korea, Seoul has been in the forefront promoting Korea's rich cultural heritage worldwide. When you hosted the Summer Olympics in 1988, millions of viewers around the world were not only impressed by the athletic feats of your sportsmen and sportswomen but were also captivated by Korea's rich cultural displays. Millions of football fans around the world will keenly look forward to another treat of Korea's cultural tradition and sporting spirit when you host the World Cup in 2002.

We in Singapore have been privileged to have hosted some of your top traditional performance troupes at our annual arts festival. The Kyonggi do Dance Company performed in Singapore at this year's festival. The world-renowned soprano Sumi Jo performed before a full house in Singapore last year. I had the privilege of meeting her at the concert and I enjoyed her performance very much.

At another level, Seoul symbolizes the resilient spirit of the Korean people. It is this resilience that has enabled you to rise from the ashes of the Korean War, like the proverbial phoenix, to become a vibrant metropolis. More recently, Korea has shown the world how it has, through courageous reforms, overcome the Asian financial crisis. I am sure that as the political, economic and educational hub of Korea, Seoul has played a critical role in Korea's remarkable recovery.

I am touched by your gesture of friendship. I am indeed privileged to accept the Key of Fortune and the Certificate of Honorary Citizen of Seoul City.

Thank you.

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National Archives of Singapore