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Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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DEMOLITION OF NATIONAL THEATRE

The National Theatre which is closed with effect from 16 January '84, will be demolished. This decision is taken following a review of the 20-year-old structure by a Committee of professional engineers.

The National Theatre was completed in time for the Southeast Asian Cultural Festival in August 1963. The building was officially handed over to the National Theatre Trust in May 1964. During and soon after its construction, doubts were expressed about the quality of the workmanship in the fabrication of the steel roof structure and parts of the structure were rewelded. To ensure safety of the structure, specialist firms were subsequently engaged to monitor the condition of the cantilever structure and to carry out non-destructive ultra-sonic tests of the weldings and joints. Inspections at regular intervals were also carried out.

In June 1983, the Ministry of Culture in consultation with the Director of the Public Works Department appointed a four-man Committee to study the safety of the cantilever roof and to recommend, if necessary, the possible courses of action to be taken. The Committee comprised the following:

Chairman: Dr S Banerjee,
Senior Executive Engineer,
Structural Design & Investigation Branch,
Public Works Department.

Members: Prof Lee Seng Lip,
Head of the Department
of Civil Engineering,
National University of Singapore.

Mr Y C Wong,
Professional Engineer.

Mr Goh Joon Yap,
Professional Engineer.

After carefully examining the facts and materials available, the Committee's findings are that:-

- (a) The welded joints off the structure are generally substandard and the actual strength of such joints cannot be reliably established.
- (b) Some critical parts of the structure are stressed to such an extent that the stresses they are subject to are beyond normally acceptable permissible limits.
- (c) The Structure is substandard and unsound as it does not have the generally accepted factor of safety.
- (d) Continuous general monitoring of the condition and behaviour of the structure cannot be relied upon in safeguarding its future safety.

The Committee considered the continued use of the structure in its present form inadvisable and suggested three alternative courses of action:

- (i) Strengthening of the structure by propping the ends of the cantilever roof trusses.
- (ii) Strengthening of the roof structure by providing additional supports to it as part of the overall architectural modification and upgrading of the building.
- (iii) Demolish.

In considering the various proposals of the Committee, the Government has taken into account the plans to construct an elevated eight-lane expressway in front of the Theatre. Construction work on the proposed central expressway is scheduled to commence in late 1985 and will take 30 months to complete. The proposed expressway is expected to take up a large portion of the Theatre compound fronting Clemenceau Avenue. The car park between Clemenceau Avenue and Tank Road will be affected and the

Theatre's existing access to Clemenceau Avenue will be cut off. During and after the completion of the expressway, noise and dust around the vicinity will increase, rendering the Theatre unsuitable for the staging of performances.

After careful consideration of all aspects the government has decided to close the National Theatre and demolish it.

The National Theatre was built with the assistance and contribution of Singaporeans from all walks of life. It was an important project, in the early days of nation building, to inculcate a spirit of self help and sense of nationhood. The government would like to place on record its appreciation and gratitude to all those who contributed towards the setting up of the Theatre.

The closing down of the National Theatre will disrupt temporarily the larger performances scheduled to be held there, but the Kallang Theatre, with a capacity of 2,000 seats, will be available in the third quarter of 1985. When ready, the Kallang Theatre will be a more attractive venue for many of the performances which would have been held in the National Theatre.

MINISTRY OF CULTURE

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