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Speech by Dr. Goh Keng Swee, Minister of
Defence, at the Opening of the SEIWAEN
(Japanese Garden) on Friday, 16th February
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As our GNP goes up, and as employment, wages and salaries also go up, people will seek more ways for relaxation and enjoyment of leisure. We in Singapore have worked very hard in the last few years and we deserve to enjoy the fruits of our labour.

The Government had foreseen this need and several plans worked out years ago are now showing results. For instance, the National Stadium is nearly completed, Mount Faber and Changi beach have been improved, Sentosa is under development with a lagoon, a golf course and an overhead cable car system under construction. Today at Jurong, we see the inauguration of a major project begun years ago - the Japanese Garden. It will provide many hours of pleasant relaxation to Singaporeans and their families; it will also serve as a notable tourist attraction.

While amenities such as this Garden and others which I mentioned are important and necessary, we must not at the same time overlook the need for artistic development in the Republic. I am afraid this aspect of our life has been sadly neglected in the past.

It is true we have a thriving school of artists, some of whom have established international reputations. But the way up is hard, and for the few who make their way to the top, large numbers fall by the wayside.

In this connection, some years back, a group of enthusiasts began a public subscription to establish an art gallery. This is a very worthwhile project; I hope it has not died a natural death.

Take another sphere of artistic endeavour - music. It strikes me as something of a minor scandal that Singapore does not have a symphony orchestra. Let us compare ourselves with others. Take the British, who are by no means the most musical of the European nations. Liverpool is a major sea-port like Singapore, though with less than one-third of our population. Like Singapore, it is not noted as a centre of artistic or cultural excellence. Yet the Liverpool Royal Philharmonic Orchestra has achieved world renown.

Even a holiday resort like Bournemouth, with a population of 150,000, has a symphony orchestra. The city of Bath, hardly more than a large village of 50,000 souls, has a well-known orchestra - the Bath Festival Orchestra.

I trust something will soon be done to establish a symphony orchestra in Singapore. Perhaps we can do it in two stages, starting with a chamber ensemble, expanding eventually to a full size symphony orchestra. But it is important that the members are full-time professionals. It costs money to maintain an orchestra - the labourer is worthy of his hire and this applies to musicians no less than to others, that is to say, good musicians.

Now, some of you may ask, "Am I being snobbish and snooty? Is this idea just a matter of keeping up with the Joneses?" I assure you that this is not so.

Of course, some devotees of classical music tend to adopt superior airs. This is a mistake. They are not superior;

they are just lucky. Lucky in the sense that they have one source of enjoyment and delight unknown to their less fortunate low-browed brethren.

Apart from this, a taste for the arts - be it music, painting, drama, literature - makes for a cultivated and rounded personality.

This is desirable as an end in itself. But it is not without economic value. Take, for instance, the self-made millionaire, with a keen nose and even keener appetite for money as well as unlimited energy and unswerving purpose. They are the principal engines of our economic growth, and we are fortunate we have sufficient numbers of them.

Yet if one examines them closely, a serious defect becomes apparent. They cannot be considered rounded or cultivated men. One major economic consequence of this is that they do not usually know how to bring up their children properly.

So we see numerous instances of the squandering of family fortunes by wrongly brought up children. Being generally crude and uncouth types, these dissipate their family estate through foolish extravagance. The principal source of their ruin can be traced to two elements - to quote the former worldly-wise Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman, they are fast women and slow horses.

Let us not consider the subject of music as a trifling matter, of no import in the affairs of state. The ancients knew

better. Both Plato and Confucius correctly recognised the crucial role which music as an instrument of state policy could play in producing the desirable type of citizen. Neglect in Singapore on this subject has given rise to serious problems.

I refer to the widespread popularity of the barbarous form of music produced by the steel guitar linked to a ear shattering system of sound amplification. Voice accompaniment takes the form of inane tasteless wailing. It is barbarous music of this kind that is mainly responsible for attracting the mindless young of Singapore to the cult of permissiveness of the western world. It is hardly a coincidence that the problem of drug addiction has become serious where performers and audience foregather. I trust the Ministry of Home Affairs will take stern action against this menace.

The Japanese Garden, which is now open to the public at a modest fee, is unique in that it combines an art form of some refinement with popular appeal. I am not an expert in gardens, Japanese or any other kind, and I would refrain from commenting on its features. But even the uninitiated can see how beautiful it looks and can derive pleasure from it. This is sufficient justification for the project.

Professor Kinsaku Nakane, who designed the Garden, deserves our heartiest congratulations on the care and effort which he has devoted to the Garden. Many Japanese companies, as well as the Japanese Government, have made valuable contributions to this project, and to them our thanks. This Garden will be an added amenity of value for both our citizens and visitors from abroad.

I have much pleasure in declaring this Garden open.