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**SPEECH BY BG GEORGE YEO, MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND
MINISTER FOR INFORMATION AND THE ARTS,
AT THE KAMPONG KEMBANGAN NATIONAL DAY CHARITY DINNER
ON THURSDAY, 18 AUGUST 1994 AT 7.30 PM
(SPEECH IN CHINESE)**

A few weeks ago, we presented the Master Plan of The Esplanade Arts Centre to the public. One Chinese member of the public complained that the architecture was not Chinese enough. He said Singapore was more than three-quarters Chinese. Therefore the architecture should at least be three-quarters Chinese. Such a viewpoint is not good for Singapore and will give rise to problems.

Although the Chinese are the dominant race in Singapore, we must be sensitive to the feelings of the non-Chinese in Singapore and the region. Otherwise there will be political problems. Earlier this year, the Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir described Singapore as a Chinese state in a speech he gave in Beijing. When I led a Young PAP (People's Action Party) delegation to Indonesia recently, a Indonesian youth leader asked me about the position of Malays in the Republic of Singapore Air Force. I explained that the question is one of national security and that national considerations changed from time to time. For example, Chinese communism was once a problem. In the past, all those with family links in China had to be carefully investigated. In 1983, when I was a Major in the Air Force, I decided to follow my parents to visit my grandparents in Shantou. At that time our passports needed a special chop before we could visit China. I was interviewed by the Internal Security Department (ISD) for one hour before I left and debriefed by ISD for one hour after I came back. There is nothing unusual about this. When I gave this explanation, our Indonesian friends understood. We also understand why, for national security reasons, they still harbour suspicions about China and Chinese people.

As Chinese people we should be proud of our culture and our achievements. Today Chinese all over the world are making great strides in business and scholarship. Mandarin is fast becoming an international language. I have been talking to publishers and editors in the western media, including TV. Many of them are aware of the growing importance of Mandarin. Many Western journalists are now learning the Chinese language. Chinese culture and the use of Mandarin in Singapore help us to play a valuable role in the economic, cultural and political exchange between East and West.

We must therefore strike a good balance between being proud of our culture and language and being sensitive to non-Chinese in Singapore and the region. It is easier for Chinese in Singapore to do this because we have always been a multi-racial society. But we must also remember that only 30 years ago, right here in Kampong Kembangan, we had serious racial riots. We can only maintain good racial relations by being sensitive to the feelings of the Malays, the Indians and the Eurasians in Singapore. In this way, we also help to bridge the gap between the Chinese and non-Chinese in the world.

National Day is a good time for us to reflect on what it means to be Chinese in a multi-racial society. We are proud to be Chinese and we are also proud to be Singaporean. This is Singapore's particular characteristic which enables us to have good economic, cultural and political relations with our neighbours in Southeast Asia and also with China and India. I wish everyone here a Happy National Day.

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