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SPEECH BY BG (RES) GEORGE YEO, MINISTER FOR INFORMATION AND THE ARTS AND SECOND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AT THE OPENING OF CHINESE CULTURAL FESTIVAL 1993, WORLD CHINESE BOOK FAIR AND INTERNATIONAL CHINESE LITERARY CAMP AT WTC EXPO GATEWAY ON 29 MAY 93 AT 10.00 AM

I am very happy to officiate at the Opening of this year's Chinese Cultural Festival, World Chinese Book Fair and International Chinese Literary Camp.

2. Such events help us to establish Singapore as one of the important centres of Chinese culture on the Pacific Rim. Our objective in the next century should be to make Singapore a centre of Chinese culture, a centre of Malay culture, a centre of Indian culture and, also, a centre of Western culture. In this way, Singapore will become a hub city with links to all parts of Asia and the world.

3 To establish Singapore as a centre for Chinese culture, we need both quantity and quality. With the success of our bilingual policy and the Speak Mandarin Campaign, we now have a broad base for the continuing development of Chinese culture. But it is not enough to have a broad base. We also need points of high achievement. Put in another way, we must supplement quantity with quality.

4 We need quality in the fields of language, art and culture. In Chinese visual arts and music, we have made good progress. In the other performing arts, we must make a greater effort. For example, Chinese stage drama in Singapore today has lagged far behind English stage drama. This is despite the longer history of Chinese drama in Singapore and the fact that Channel 8 Chinese language viewership is 3 to 4 times Channel 5 English language viewership. This shows that we have not been able to convert quantity to quality. The Chinese newspapers, Hwa Chong JC and other junior colleges, the SAP schools, the clans and other cultural organisations should give this area more emphasis. I have asked the National Arts Council to give its support.

5 Chinese culture in Singapore will decline unless we succeed in educating the next generation of leaders and specialists in Chinese language, art and culture. We need a successor generation of government leaders, teachers, writers, journalists, artists and other cultural workers who are proficient in the Chinese language. Without a successor generation, the present level of Chinese culture in Singapore cannot be maintained, much less developed. In the present generation, many of those who perform such roles are graduates of Nanyang University. Indeed, with growing economic prospects in East Asia, the economic value of Nanyang University graduates has gone up.

6 The problem is the next generation. It is not possible to recreate Nanyang University in its original form. But we must preserve its spirit. Nanyang University was established in response to the unfair education policy of the British colonial

government. The situation today is completely different. We have to promote Chinese language, art and culture in a way which takes into account the developments in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, the multi-racial character of our society and the political situation in Southeast Asia.

7 We should expand the facilities for teaching Chinese language, art and culture in NUS and NTU. The demand is increasing. I have attended many cultural events in NUS and NTU.

Among the undergraduates, there is growing interest in Chinese culture. The Chinese language societies at both universities are very active. The Chinese Language Dept in NUS has been expanding both in staff and student strength. In NTU, a high proportion of the lecturers are proficient in the Chinese language. With the transfer of NIE to NTU, the Chinese Language Division of NIE is likely to grow to serve the whole of NTU. I am very happy that NTU has decided to work closely with the Federation of Chinese Clan Associations on the establishment of a Chinese Cultural Centre at the old Nantah Admin Building and is also keen to have links with the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. The Singapore Open University (SOU) is also considering courses in the Chinese language. As more Singaporeans do business in China, we should also have courses in Chinese for business management, accountancy, economics and relevant technical subjects.

8 With the primary and secondary SAP schools, we have a good base for the development of Chinese language, art and culture. With the LEP programmes at Hwa Chong and Temasek Junior Colleges and the expansion of teaching and research facilities at NUS, NTU and SOU, we will be able to complete the education pyramid. Our general approach should be an open one. We should recruit teachers and admit students from all over the world to raise our own standards. Only then can we be confident that there will be generations to succeed the Nantah generation.

9 The development of Chinese language, art and culture must take place within the multi-racial context of Singapore and Southeast Asia. Only then can the Chinese in Singapore live in harmony with the other races. When the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts was formed in 1938, two of its most important objectives were "to integrate the cultures of different races" and "to bridge the arts of the East and the West". The result was the development of the Nanyang style of art. The Nanyang style is very inclusive. For example, artists like Chen Wen Hsi, Cheong Soo Pieng, Chen Chong Swee and Liu Kang drew great inspiration from the arts of Indonesia and Europe. The general development of Chinese language, art and culture in Singapore should have the same Nanyang spirit which is inclusive, tolerant and non-threatening to others. This will be our contribution to world Chinese civilisation. If there is to be continuing peace and prosperity in East Asia, it is very important that world Chinese culture should develop a new Nanyang spirit. Otherwise there will be a lot of trouble. In a sense, this is already happening. One reason why China is closely studying our experience in Singapore is because of the way we have successfully bridged East and West, and North and South.

10 It is with the new Nanyang spirit that I congratulate the organisers for their good work and wish the triple events great success.

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