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**SPEECH BY RADM (NS) LUI TUCK YEW
ACTING MINISTER FOR INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS
AT THE PATRON OF HERITAGE AWARDS 2008 CEREMONY
ON FRIDAY, 17 APRIL 2009 AT 6:40PM
AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE**

Professor Tommy Koh, Chairman, National Heritage Board

Patrons and supporters of heritage

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good evening

Thank you for joining us today, as we celebrate a record year in heritage philanthropy. The Patron of Heritage Awards honour 66 patrons who, together in 2008, made an unprecedented contribution equivalent to around S\$110 million to heritage-related causes. This is extremely heartening, and a very pleasant surprise, to know that people are continuously contributing to our heritage, given the recent state of the economy.

Increased synergy and connection with the public

2 The growth of community support shows that our efforts in raising the awareness and connection of our heritage among Singaporeans, and residents living here, have been successful. Each gift is precious because it underlines the confidence of the donor in us as guardians and promoters of the nation's heritage. Over the years, it has been gratifying to see the bonds strengthen between the heritage institutions and the private/people sectors.

3 We are witnessing a greater diversity of donors and supporters stepping forward. More individuals and organisations from varied fields are taking a greater

interest in supporting the heritage cause. They have enabled our museums to sharpen their programming, marketing, research and operational strategies, as well as invest in improvements to infrastructure.

4 2008 has been a most eventful year for the heritage scene, and much credit must go to the continued support of our philanthropic partners. Your kind contributions have helped us enhance the museum experience for all to enjoy, organise mass appeal events and innovative programmes such as the iconic *Singapore HeritageFest* and *Explore Singapore!*, as well as showcase world-class exhibitions. These include the *Vietnam Festival*, *Xu Beihong in Nanyang*, *Children's Season* and *Night Festival*.

Gifts from the heart

5 Time does not permit me to elaborate on each and every donation, but let me just highlight a few. An extremely generous gift, consisting of Peranakan artefacts, came from a Singapore Peranakan family who are descendants of pioneer and philanthropist Mr. Tan Kim Seng. This comprehensive donation of over 300 pieces of nonyaware by Mr. and Mrs Tan Eng Sian to the Peranakan Museum covers nearly all the major coloured forms of nonyaware. It is not only the largest single donation ever received by the museum, but also the largest from a local supporter this year. With this eclectic contribution, the Peranakan Museum now holds one of the finest collections of nonyaware in the world.

6 Mr. Koh Seow Chuan, an avid supporter of the local heritage and cultural scene, donated an extensive collection of rare printed materials on Singapore, Southeast Asia and Asia to the National Library Board. This includes antique maps, books and hand-carried letters. Researchers on the social history of Singapore will be able to tap on this rich source of materials.

7 About 3,000 photograph slides and negatives, taken by the late President Yusof bin Ishak in the 1950s and 1960s, were donated to the National Archives of Singapore by his wife Puan Noor Aishah Bte Md Salim. The late President combined his love for photography and for his family through these photos, which provide

insights into his personal life and serve as a rich visual resource on Singapore in those days. Documenting the national events and social scenes of Singapore, these will be helpful for projects on Singapore's heritage and nation-building story.

8 We have also benefitted immensely from contributions from beyond our shores. Renowned Chinese artist Mr. Wu Guanzhong had personally selected and donated 113 of his artworks to the Singapore Art Museum. His selfless gesture has enabled the museum to be the public custodian of the largest collection of his works globally. It is also a clear statement of the faith Mr. Wu has in Singapore's capability of taking care and showcasing his remarkable works for future generations to enjoy.

9 The Singapore Art Museum has been the proud recipient of several more noteworthy artworks from the artists themselves. They include Chinese artists Feng Zhengjie, Gao Xingjian, as well as Singapore-based artists Cheng Yajie and Jeremy Ramsey. Photographer Dominic Khoo supported several non-profit organisations through donating the revenue derived from the sale of his photography book *Pure* and tables at the *Pure* charity auction dinner. Dr Tan Eng Liang, who dedicated his life to sports, also contributed his prized collection of medals, trophies, stamps and other sports-related artefacts to the Singapore Sports Council.

Investing in the future of Singapore

10 Many organisations have also committed to keeping our history and culture alive, bringing them closer to Singaporeans and visitors. Hong Leong Foundation, for instance, has contributed S\$5 million to the Asian Civilisations Museum over three years. The largest cash donation received in 2008, the funds will cover part of the cost of the expansion of the museum's China gallery and the acquisition of artefacts for the collection.

11 Another long time heritage supporter, JPMorgan Chase Foundation, has also provided grants to the Asian Civilisations Museum to support its programmes to benefit the public. They include the blockbuster *Vietnam! From Myth to Modernity* and its related outreach programme, *Vietnam 24 Hours@ACM*, interactive components in the Peranakan Museum to cater to children with special needs, as

well as creatively provided opportunities to expose less privileged children to learn more about culture at the museum.

12 Daimler brought with them new perspectives in stimulating interests for the arts by contributing significantly to the Singapore Art Museum exhibition – *is it tomorrow yet? Highlights from the Daimler Art Collection (1926 – 2006)*. It also included an invaluable art education programme for the young.

13 Many organisations offered their professional expertise or in-kind support to facilitate behind-the-scene work of museums. Singapore Airlines Cargo Ltd, for example, supported the National Museum of Singapore in the transport of exhibition pieces for its shows, *Doubleness: Photography of Chang Chien-Chi* and *Voom Portraits – Robert Wilson*. In addition, Panasonic Systems Asia Pacific enhanced the visitor experience at the National Museum of Singapore through its sponsorship of cutting-edge equipment. Other in-kind contributions, such as venue sponsorship from Frasers Centrepoint Malls, were invaluable to our efforts. Frasers' support helped *Singapore HeritageFest 2008* to penetrate the heartlands extensively for the first time in the festival's history.

Encouraging heritage philanthropy

14 The committed support of individuals and organisations not only helps us grow our national collection, but also strengthens our collective sense of pride in Singapore's heritage and culture. In these uncertain times, we are deeply moved by the selfless contributions from all our donors. They have helped keep our heritage alive as sources of inspiration and motivation.

15 Preserving and showcasing our culture require more than just the efforts of museums alone. We need the active support of individuals and organisations that have a common stake in our nation's growth to contribute and strengthen our sense of pride in Singapore's heritage. In this economic climate, the arts and heritage sectors will need all the support they can get. Your contributions will go towards establishing Singapore as a global hub for Asian culture, art and heritage.

Conclusion

16 On behalf of the National Heritage Board, I would like to thank all 66 heritage patrons once again. The unwavering support from like-minded individuals and corporations clearly demonstrates the commitment towards heritage philanthropy in Singapore. Let us never forget that what we preserve today will become the heritage treasures of tomorrow.

17 I wish you a very pleasant evening.