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**SPEECH BY DR. LEE BOON YANG, MINISTER FOR INFORMATION,
COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS AT PATRON OF HERITAGE AWARDS
CEREMONY ON 3 APRIL 2007, 6.15 PM AT NATIONAL MUSEUM OF
SINGAPORE**

Professor Tommy Koh, Chairman, National Heritage Board,

Patrons and supporters of heritage,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen.

Good evening.

We are here for the inaugural Patron of Heritage Awards 2006. These awards are to recognise and celebrate the great generosity of exceptional individuals and companies who have made more than \$118 million worth of donations and loans to Singapore's public museums from April 2004 to December 2006. The 86 heritage benefactors are an inspiration to all and truly deserving of the Awards.

Cultural Philanthropy

2 We are indeed fortunate to have many people who have given generously for the promotion of the cultural and artistic activities. The National Arts Council's Patron of Arts Award annually recognises supporters of the arts. Benefactors who

have been contributing to the heritage institutions and events have been acknowledged under this award as well as through the Heritage Benefactor's Dinner, in the past. This year, we have decided to accord greater recognition for heritage philanthropy. Hence, we are presenting the Patron of Heritage Awards to the many supporters, individuals and organisations, who have contributed not only money but also valuable and exquisite collections, sponsorships in-kind and professional services.

Cultivating Cultural Philanthropy

3 Just as we need two hands to clap, promoting heritage is a partnership effort. The Government has a key role in developing our culture and heritage institutions and planning major heritage events. For instance, the Government had introduced special tax deduction schemes to benefit donors to the arts and culture. However we will not achieve much success without the active participation of citizens and corporations. That is why we must encourage, promote and recognize philanthropy so that the public, people, private partnership will grow and enrich our culture and heritage

4 Today in Singapore, we already have a number of discerning and sophisticated private collectors of artefacts and artworks. They have built up very interesting and valuable collections. They have become an important source of heritage artefacts and artworks to supplement our museums' collection through loans and donations. Such loans and donations help to complete our museums' collections, enabling the museums to curate more comprehensive exhibitions for the public.

5 The donations and loans we have received is a glowing testimony to the growing interest, pride and confidence in our museums. I would like to thank all donors and contributors for your unstinting support and generosity which had been critical in our effort to enrich our culture and heritage for present and future generations to enjoy.

Recognising Long-term Lenders

6 Therefore, a key feature of the Patron of Heritage Awards is the recognition for long-term loans of artefacts and artworks. The Distinguished Supporter of Heritage Award honours and acknowledges such long term lenders whose heritage philanthropy drawing on their private collections had made possible the enjoyment of such works by more people.

7 One exceptional example of long-term loan comes from the Islamic artefacts by Mr. and Mrs. Tareq Rajab. Hailing from Kuwait, the Rajabs have been instrumental in helping the Asian Civilisations Museum realise its aim to present a comprehensive range of Asian cultures. The artefacts they have lent have formed a vital part of the displays in the museum's West Asian/Islamic galleries for the last four years.

8 Another great example is Dr and Mrs Roger Mariette. This couple had generously loaned a significant part of their exquisite Peranakan collection to the Asian Civilisations Museum for more than 10 years. This important collection will be a key highlight at the new Peranakan Museum.

Individuals and Corporate Supporters

9 I am glad that we have a good mix of donors ranging from individuals to corporations and foundations. Another individual donor whom I would like to highlight is Mrs Rathi Karthigesu. A prominent classical Indian dancer in the 1950s, Mrs Karthigesu has donated a collection of rare Indian sculptures in dancing poses, to the National Museum of Singapore. Her contribution will certainly add much lustre to the museum's collection and exhibitions.

10 On the corporate front, both local companies and global MNCs have stepped forward to do their part for the heritage cause. Through the generous funding by JPMorgan, the Asian Civilisations Museum was able to realise several major initiatives including the complete renovation of its ExplorAsian Zones so as to better engage young visitors to the museum. The Asian Civilisations Museum has also been the beneficiary of JP Morgan's annual Corporate Challenge Road Run, since 2004. Another corporate donor is SingPost who has been funding the Singapore Philatelic Museum to promote greater appreciation for philately.

11 The Lee Foundation is another long-time friend of the National Heritage Board. The Lee Foundation has given generously to many causes. Their donations have made possible acquisitions for the Asian Civilisations Museum's Peranakan collection as well as its current Peranakan Museum development. They have also sponsored world-class blockbusters at the Asian Civilisations Museum such as

Journey of Faith and the on-going Mystery Men exhibition and the publication of Singapore: The Encyclopedia.

12 Unfortunately time does not permit me to name all individual and corporate supporters. But clearly our museums and heritage institutions rely heavily on their support including sponsorships in-kind through provision of venues and professional services. These gifts in-kind enable us to organise many heritage events and exhibitions.

Conclusion

13 On behalf of the National Heritage Board and our museums, I express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to all 86 recipients of the inaugural Patron of Heritage Awards. I hope many more individuals and organisations will come forward to support our heritage. Together, we can realise our vision of Singapore as a vibrant, inspiring and creative city rooted in our heritage and culture.

15 I wish you all a very pleasant evening. Thank you.