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**SPEECH BY MR MAH BOW TAN
MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AT ASIAN ART MUSEUM DIRECTORS' FORUM 2007
OPENING AT SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM
ON 16 NOVEMBER 2007 AT 7.00PM**

Excellencies,
Overseas Delegates,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to be with you at this opening of the Asian Art Museum Directors' Forum (AAMDF) 2007, as well as the opening of "From the Everyday to the Imagined: An Exhibition of Indian Art". The attendance of such a distinguished group of art museum professionals, academics and speakers from across Asia, Southeast Asia, Australia, Europe and the USA, signifies our shared commitment and interest in furthering arts and cultural cooperation globally. It also clearly demonstrates the valuable role served by this Forum to promote dialogue and engagement among art museums and professionals in Asia.

2 AAMDF was inaugurated in Beijing last year to recognize the important role of art museums in the development of culture. It also underscored the importance of interactions and collaborations among Asian art museums for the advancement of art and museums in Asia.

The focus of this year's forum would be on the new roles of Asian art museums, as new trends and directions emerge in the Asian art scene.

3 Asian cities, as a result of the industrial and financial revival in the last decade, have become important nodal points for world art. For example, the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) is involved in many dynamic visual arts programmes in Asia, such as the collaboration with the National Contemporary Art Museum of Korea in the forthcoming Realism in Asian Art exhibition, and many biennales in Asia next year. The global media attention and critical acclaim accorded to many Asian artists and their works indicates a renaissance in Asian Art. For instance, SAM received multiple coverage in the International Herald Tribune and Newsweek for its exhibitions in the past year.

4 However, even as we discuss the progress of Asian art as a whole, we must also remember that there are multiple communities in Asia, rich in tradition and heritage, which may not be in the global art network just yet. It is in this link between cultural roots and contemporary expressions that art museums continue to play a central role.

5 The AAMDF plays an important function in defining the future direction of the Asian art and role of the art museums in an ever-changing world. AAMDF as a sustained and common platform for Asian art museums will also grow into its role as an advocate for the

art museums in Asia, and become a leader in shaping public discourse about the arts community and the role of art in Asian societies.

6 I am heartened by your attendance tonight. I understand that since the last AAMDF, you have discussed, argued, agreed and disagreed on directions that Asian art museums should take. We all want this to continue, so that the dream of a true renaissance in Asian art will come true, and there will be an emergence of a strong and confident self-image of individual Asian society through cultural expression. This will not only be instrumental in further development of art scholarship, collection and programmes in Asia, it will also be the key element in motivating a society's economic and social success.

7 In conjunction with the 2nd AAMDF 2007 and as a follow up to the Southeast Asian art collection presented the 1st AAMDF, the SAM is presenting 'From the Everyday to the Imagined: An Exhibition of Indian Art.' This Indian art exhibition seeks to highlight nine artists' investigation and presentation of everyday realities and fantasies. Artists featured in this exhibition include notable stalwarts who forged ahead during India's assertion of nationalism and the almost simultaneous rise of modernist art, as well as those who sought a timely new visual language by dissecting what already existed in Indian artistic heritage.

8 We are happy for this opportunity to showcase the art of India at a time when our fellow Singaporeans with roots in India are celebrating Deepavali, the Festival of Lights. No less significant, is also the fact that 2007 marks the 60th anniversary of India's Independence. I believe this is the second time we are having an Indian art exhibition at SAM. In 1997, the Singapore Art Museum held its first exhibition of Indian art. Aptly titled *Tryst with Destiny*, it coincided with the 50th Anniversary of India's Independence.

9 On this note, I wish all of you an enjoyable and fruitful discussion. To our overseas participants, I wish you a pleasant and memorable stay in Singapore.

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