

jc19990327d

To:

cc: (bcc: NHB NASReg/NHB/SINGOV)

Subject: (Embargoed) Speech by Dr John Chen, 27 Mar 99, 10 am

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, #36-00 PSA Building, 460
Alexandra Road, Singapore 119963. Tel: 3757794/5

=====

EMBARGO INSTRUCTIONS

The attached press release/speech is EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY.

Please check against delivery.

For assistance call 3757795

=====

SPRINTER 3.0, Singapore's Press Releases on the Internet, is located at:

<http://www.gov.sg/sprinter/>

=====

Embargoed Until Delivery

National Archives of Singapore

SPEECH BY DR JOHN CHEN,

ACTING MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS

AT THE METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE'S

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL DAY OPEN HOUSE

AND LAUNCH OF NEW PUBLIC WEATHER SERVICE

AT TERMINAL 2, CHANGI AIRPORT ON 27 MAR 99 AT 10.00 AM

Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to be present here this morning to join you for the opening ceremony of the Met Service's World Meteorological Day Open House and the launch of a new weather service for the public.

2. Each year, World Meteorological Day is celebrated on 23 March to commemorate the coming into force of the Convention of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) in 1950. Since 1961, World Meteorological Day has been celebrated annually. The celebrations have helped to increase public awareness of the contributions of national meteorological services in enhancing the socio-economic activities of a nation.

3. The Open House is held today, a Saturday, instead of the 23 March to make it more convenient for members of the public to visit the Met Service. It is hoped that today's event will provide an opportunity for members of the public and those who are specialised users of Met Service to know more about the work of the Met Service Department. At the same time, the department will make use of the occasion to gather feedback and suggestions on how to improve its services.

4. The Met Service has always played an important supporting role for a wide range of economic and social activities in Singapore, in particular to aviation, shipping, defence, building and construction and the environment, in addition to the provision of daily weather forecasts to the public at large. These services have contributed to the enhancement of safety and economic benefits of the various weather-sensitive activities.

5. To provide an effective service, the department has to keep a close tab of weather conditions over a large area, hundreds of thousand times the size of Singapore. To do so, a comprehensive range of advanced remote weather surveillance systems and processing facilities have been acquired and implemented, including the harnessing of advanced computer weather prediction models. Being small does not prevent the Met Service from becoming one of the most modern meteorological services in the region - capable of providing excellent meteorological services in support of a world class transportation hub.

6. The recent El Niño event, which brought widespread prolonged dry weather conditions and resulted in one of the worst smoke haze episodes in the region, has brought into greater focus some of the non-traditional roles of the Met Service - i.e. the provision of land and forest fire monitoring and early warning to regional communities involved in fire-fighting and smoke haze mitigation activities. Met Service, which hosts the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre, has been acknowledged by the World Meteorological Organisation for playing a key role in the provision of various advisories during the 1997/98 smoke haze episode. Such an event reminds us that adverse impacts of climate events such as the El Niño, respect no national boundaries. While Singapore is fortunate to be spared of weather calamities such as typhoons, tornadoes or earthquakes, we are not totally immune from natural disasters occurring elsewhere, just like we cannot be totally shielded from the regional economic malaise. Indeed, abnormal weather patterns can affect the yield of certain crops, thus affecting demand and supply and hence prices of food, while some diseases have a tendency to be associated with the seasons. A

jc19990327d

knowledge of weather and its fluctuations can therefore be very useful in many spheres of human activity when used intelligently - be it in the planning of optimum sea and air navigation routes, forecasting demand for certain goods and services, in scheduling of building works or simply for making a decision on whether to engage in an outdoor sport activity.

7 Weather forecast services, therefore, have great potential in helping to improve the efficiency of the production of goods and services. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that the Met Service has set up a new arm to focus on the development and provision of new specialised services to support better decision-making in weather-sensitive activities and to enhance the competitiveness of our economy. The new public weather service, "Nowcast for Singapore", which we are launching today and which provides round-the-clock detailed short-range forecasts of weather conditions to be expected over the main HDB town centres in Singapore, is a good example of such services developed for the public. The MetService will capitalise on the expected wave of e-commerce activities by developing and implementing later this year new customised on-line services for shipping, aviation and other specialised users. Such services reflect the continuing effort of the department to improve its services to specific industries and to the community at large.

8. On this note, it is my pleasure now to launch Nowcast for Singapore and to declare the Open House open.

National Archives of Singapore