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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY DR JOHN CHEN, MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS & INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGY & NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FOR THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF Ngee Ann Polytechnic High Voltage Training Centre (HVTC)  
ON FRIDAY 16 JUL 99 AT 9.30 AM AT THE ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT OF Ngee Ann  
POLYTECHNIC

MR CHOO CHIAU BENG, CHAIRMAN OF THE POLYTECHNIC COUNCIL

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GOOD MORNING

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It gives me great pleasure to be here this morning to officiate at the opening of the High Voltage Training Centre at the Electrical Engineering Department of the Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

The Asian economic crisis has taught us many lessons. It has made us more aware of our weaknesses and heightened our sense of urgency to implement programmes and policies to prepare ourselves for tougher economic competition ahead. One of the key challenges we face is to get Singaporeans to adopt lifelong learning. Lifelong learning will become more and more important as the industrial economy of the 20th century is being replaced by the knowledge-based economy (KBE) of the 21st century. In a KBE, the competitiveness of a worker, or a company or a nation, depends essentially on how well knowledge or innovation is used to produce products and services. Because of intense competition, knowledge that works well today will be overtaken quickly by new and better knowledge tomorrow. Innovation and change will be the order of the day. We must therefore be prepared to continuously unlearn old skills, learn new ones and keep on relearning. We must be enterprising and innovative, always seeking to create that extra value and extra edge in order to remain globally competitive.

The need for continuing education and training cuts across all sectors of our economy. For the electrical power industry, you need to train and upgrade the technical knowledge of your engineering personnel to increase their ability to handle a higher level of job and newer and more sophisticated electrical power equipment. The setting-up of the High Voltage Training Centre in Ngee Ann is therefore timely. It will help meet these training and re-training needs.

The Electrical Workers and Contractors Licensing Regulation was amended in 1997 to empower both the Licensed Electrical Technician and Licensed Electrician with a larger scope of work. A Licensed Electrical Technician is now allowed to carry out switching operations under the supervision of a Licensed Electrical Engineer. The Licensed Electrical Technician can also supervise the work of Licensed Electricians for a load up to 500 KVA. In addition, the Licensed Electrical Technician and Licensed Electrician can be appointed as competent person by an authorised High Voltage switching Engineer to carry out work on high voltage apparatus. This facility in Ngee Ann will help support the training and retraining of Licensed Electrical Technicians and Licensed Electricians and prepare them for the larger scope of work that they are now empowered with.

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In the supply of electrical power, adequacy and quality of supply are two important requirements which customers expect. However, new industries such as wafer fabrication will require not only uninterrupted power supply, but also higher quality supply. This is because a slight dip in electrical voltage can render the production useless. Such failure and production restart would be very costly. I am glad that this facility in Ngee Ann will also help train those in the power supply industry to upgrade their skills to meet the high expectations of our industries.

I understand that the High Voltage Training Centre will over the next five years train about 800 people. They include:

- (i) Ngee Ann students in the electrical engineering diploma programme;

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- (ii) Licensed electrical workers, maintenance and facility personnel in charge of electrical installations of industrial, institutional and commercial complexes;
- (iii) Power engineers and technical personnel who wish to acquire experience in both High Voltage operations and IT applications in power distribution systems such as "Supervisory Control & Data Acquisition" and "Integrated Digital Protection & Control".

The training program will cover the operational, maintenance and safety aspect of a high voltage distribution system. In addition, training in data communication and the latest state-of-art protection system such as digital protection will also be included to better prepare our workers to meet the challenges of technological changes in the power industry. Looking further ahead, Ngee Ann should seek to develop this High Voltage Training Centre, the first in a tertiary institution in Singapore, into a regional high voltage training centre in support of power companies seeking to establish an external wing beyond Singapore. These are exciting challenges. I wish Ngee Ann Polytechnic every success in its endeavours.

Thank you.

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