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Subject: (Embargoed) Speech by Mr Lim Swee Say, 14 Mar 2000, 7,30pm

# *Singapore Government*

## ***PRESS RELEASE***

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, #36-00 PSA Building, 460 Alexandra Road,  
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**SPEECH BY MR LIM SWEE SAY, MINISTER OF STATE FOR  
COMMUNICATIONS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY,  
AT THE NUS CHANCELLOR'S CHALLENGE SHIELD,  
14 MARCH 2000, 7.30 PM, AT THE ENGINEERING AUDITORIUM,  
NUS ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

National Archives of Singapore

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to the NUS Chancellor's Challenge Shield  
general knowledge and current affairs quiz.

2 Traditional wisdom has always recognised that "A little knowledge is a  
dangerous thing". However, in the age of information revolution and knowledge  
based economy, the dangers of being poorly informed are even greater.

3 The world is changing so fast that new technologies and knowledge can render old skills obsolete overnight. Downsizing and retrenchments are common even in good times. Far fewer companies are offering lifetime careers than in the past. Today's knowledge worker must be able to learn non-stop and keep up with new developments and trends, both within and beyond his field of specialisation. Everyone must be responsible for managing his own career by ensuring that his skills and knowledge stay relevant. Learning and thinking about macro economic and societal issues can help one develop a broader, more balanced and mature outlook. This will be a great asset for the individual and the community.

4 Being well informed is not only important for one's career; it is also a useful attribute for being an active member of society. With a good understanding of prevailing conditions, it is more likely that one can make constructive contributions to the community.

5 An active citizen must be willing to look beyond the narrow circle of personal life and work. He or she must care enough about the larger community to keep informed, and to look out for needs or opportunities to step forward and contribute. As Singapore moves ahead economically, our societal development should not lag behind. We should continuously strive towards becoming a first world society with an enlightened population that takes an interest in public issues.

6 In today's increasingly interconnected world, we need to know not only about Singapore and its neighbours, but also about the rest of the world. There is a well-known postulate in chaos theory that the flapping of a butterfly's wings in Brazil can lead to a chain of events that causes a tornado in Texas. Even though in reality the linkage between events may not be so dramatic, it is true that technology has made the flow of information and capital so much faster and so much more convenient that events in one part of the world can indeed precipitate a whole chain of events. In this new global environment where national fates and economies are becoming more intricately intertwined, we need to become well-informed and concerned citizens, not only of Singapore, but also of the world.

7 In today's information intensive society, there is no excuse for ignorance of general knowledge and current affairs. With Internet, the olden-day challenge of

finding information has given way to the modern-day challenge of navigating the information sea and making sense of the information flood. Fortunately, technology has not only made more information available, but has also provided tools to help sort through and organise the information. Search engines are becoming more intelligent and powerful. The content and organisation of webpages can be tailored to user preferences.

8 Although in this wired age, such new techniques are available to us, the most important requirement for acquiring knowledge has always been that of an active and inquiring mind.

9 I commend the NUS Political Association for organising the Chancellor's Challenge Shield quiz, an event that will certainly help generate interest among students in general knowledge and current affairs. It is my hope for everyone here tonight that this interest will persist long after tonight, for it will be of lifelong benefit to you, to society and to the nation. I congratulate all the finalists for making it to this stage. May I also wish everyone here an enjoyable, exciting and educational evening.

10 Thank you.

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