

To:  
cc: (bcc: NHB NASReg/NHB/SINGOV)  
Subject: Speech by Mr Othman Haron Eusofe, 25 May 00, 10.30am

# *Singapore Government*

## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, 140 Hill Street #02-02 MITA Building  
Singapore 179369. Tel: 837 9666

---

### **EMBARGO INSTRUCTIONS**

The attached press release/speech is **EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY**.  
Please check against delivery.  
For assistance call 837 9666

---

**SPRInter 4.0**, Singapore's Press Releases on the Internet, is located at:  
<http://www.gov.sg/sprinter/>

---

**SPEECH BY MR OTHMAN HARON EUSOFE, MINISTER OF STATE (MANPOWER), AT MERCK SHARP & DOHME (SINGAPORE) LTD'S (MSD) CEREMONY TO MARK THE ACHIEVEMENT OF 5-MILLION WORK HOURS WITHOUT A LOST TIME INJURY FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF ITS MULTIPURPOSE PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING PLANT ON THURSDAY, 25 MAY 2000 AT 10.30 A.M.**

Mr Rick Weed, Vice President,  
Central Engineering, Merck & Co., Inc.,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is my pleasure to join you this morning to celebrate Merck, Sharp and Dohme (Singapore) Ltd (MSD)'s achievement of 5 million work hours without lost time injury for the construction of its Multipurpose Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plant.
2. Today's celebration marks two significant milestones for MSD - the achievement of an excellent safety record, and the near complete

implementation of a world-class pharmaceutical project in Singapore.

3. This achievement is indeed an impressive feat. MSD's clear and strong commitment to the safety of personnel in their workplace is the driving force behind this achievement. This commitment transforms into a corporate culture where every single employee in MSD's worksite is committed to working safely. Various contractors in the worksite have also put in place safety programmes that are effective in preventing accidents.
4. I am happy to note that MSD has considered the health and safety of their workers right from the planning and design stage. Health and Safety requirements were clearly laid down in the contract and compliance was rigorously monitored by a team of MSD project managers. This way safety becomes a non-negotiable item in competitive tendering. Additionally, MSD maintains a policy of engaging contractors with proven safety track records.
5. Traditionally, the construction industry has been shunned by the majority of Singaporeans because of its reputation as a 3 D industry, i.e. Dangerous, Dirty and Demanding. The safety records posted by the industry had done little to change this perception. The industry had recorded the highest rates of fatal accidents over the years.
6. Last year, the Government released the Construction 21, or C21 report to address the problems faced by the industry. The aim is to transform the entire value chain of the construction industry. To become a significant generator of wealth for Singapore, the industry must change from its present 3D mindset of Dirty, Dangerous and Demanding, to the 3Ps, i.e. Progressive, Productive and Professional.
7. One of the key recommendations of the C21 report is in the area of safety namely to address the construction industry's high incidence of accidents. We should not tolerate this high incidence of accidents which mars the image of the industry. Let me stress here that all accidents are preventable. Everything must be done to prevent accidents.
8. MOM is in the midst of embarking on several programmes to improve the safety and health situation in our industries. Our aim is to create a safety culture in all industries. We will push our industries, especially hazardous ones such as construction, to further enhance their safety management so as

to curb and reverse the accident trend.

9. In August 1999, the Ministry of Manpower outlined new measures that the Ministry will take to combat this unhealthy trend. One of the measures is the debarment scheme.
10. Under the scheme, the safety record of contractors would be assessed, and those with bad records would be debarred. A debarred contractor would not be allowed to employ foreign workers from Non Traditional Sources (NTS). This scheme came into effect on 1 April 2000.
11. The Ministry urges everyone concerned to play his or her part to make the industry safer. Developers of projects should be concerned with Health and Safety at work. MSD is an excellent example of a project developer who views safety as an important performance criterion to assess the contractors and sub contractors. All developers should adopt such a mindset as it is in their interest to ensure the safe construction of their projects. Developers should build into their contract documents the detailed safety requirements, and rigorously monitor and control the fulfillment of this obligation. When safety is driven by the developers, contractors will have greater incentive to maintain high safety standards at their worksites.
12. MSD is exemplary in their concern for the safety of workers involved in the plant construction. This concern has translated into an enviable safety record for this project. I believe that other organisations can strengthen their commitment to achieve the level of excellence in Occupation Safety and Health as that achieved by MSD.
13. Let me conclude by congratulating the management and staff of MSD and the various contractors and sub-contractors involved in this project on this excellent achievement. The high standard of safety at MSD's worksite is definitely worth emulating. I wish you every success in your business.
14. Thank you.