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SPEECH BY MR TAN GEE PAW, PERMANENT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AT THE LAUNCH OF THE MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE PROGRAMME IN ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING ON WEDNESDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2000 AT ENV BUILDING

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Good afternoon, Dr Cham Tao Soon, President, Nanyang Technological University, Distinguished Guests, Fellow Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen. I would like to warmly welcome all of you to this Launching Ceremony organised by ENV and NTU for the Master of Science Degree programme in Environmental Engineering.

In his National Day Rally Speech on 20 August this year, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong painted a visionary picture of education in the future - a life-long education system from pre-school to retirement, under which our people will have the opportunities to achieve their full potential by continually acquiring new knowledge and skills throughout their lives. Similarly, we at ENV have always believed that the process of education never ends. We have always encouraged our staff at all levels, regardless of their academic background and age, to pursue continual upgrading and renewal of their knowledge and skills so as to better their awareness of environmental issues and to deal with them.

ENV has forged partnerships with various academic institutions, other regulatory bodies and industry representatives to evolve a learning culture within the organisation. Examples of these are the setting up of the Environmental Engineering Research Centre at NTU and the many R&D programmes that we have embarked on with both NTU and NUS. Through these partnerships, many opportunities are created for our staff to upgrade themselves and keep abreast with new developments and latest technologies in our rapidly changing world. Besides going into partnerships, we have also set up our own training centre, The Centre for Environmental Training. The centre conducts an average of about 400 training programmes annually for our staff as well as others from the region and beyond.

Another initiative was the formation of 4 engineering committees in Sep 1997. They are the Civil Engineering Committee, the Electrical Engineering Committee, the Mechanical Engineering Committee and the Chemical Engineering Committee. These committees were formed to give added impetus to the professional development of our engineers from the 4 different engineering disciplines. Site visits, seminars, short courses, talks are some of the activities that are regularly being organised to achieve this purpose.

One of the important tasks that the committees have jointly set out to achieve is to encourage the engineers to take up postgraduate courses. We believe that the best way to do so is to go into partnership with a reputable tertiary institution which would conduct a Masters programme in Environmental Engineering at our own premises. The convenience of having the course conducted in the office premises itself will no doubt be a great incentive for our staff who wish to take up the Master of Science programme. They can now attend the lectures right after work in ENV Building itself. I am confident that the students will definitely benefit from the vast expertise of the NTU lecturers, ENV practitioners and international experts who would be delivering the lectures.

I am happy to note that we are the first Ministry who not only have successfully collaborated with a tertiary institution to set up a Masters programme, but also have succeeded in conducting the lectures at its own premises. I would like to thank all those who were involved from both ENV and NTU in setting up this programme.

Let me conclude by saying that we at ENV believe that people development is a long-term investment. With the commitment to continual education of our staff, I am confident that their knowledge and skills will stay relevant and current and will help us realise our vision to make Singapore's living environment one of the best in the world.

Thank you.

Ministry of the Environment

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