



# SPEECH

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## **Welcome Speech by Mr Peter Ho, Chairman of the DSTA Board of Directors, at the Inauguration of DSTA at the Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre Auditorium**

29 Mar 2000

DPM, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

A very warm welcome to the official launch of the Defence Science and Technology Agency, or the DSTA.

One year ago, in March 1999, DPM announced in Parliament that MINDEF would be setting up a new Statutory Board, the DSTA. In February 2000, Parliament passed the DSTA Bill, and on 15 March 2000, the Act came into force.

Over the last one year, the challenge has been to sort out the many policy issues and administrative processes. The change was more than taking the Defence Technology Group out of the Ministry and calling it a Statutory Board.

To begin with, the Defence Technology Group was not a unified structure. It comprised several line departments, each one fairly independent. Two other organisations - namely the Systems and Computer Organisation (SCO) and the Defence Medical Research Institute (DMRI) from the Defence Administration Group - were also designated to join the new Agency. The objective was to bring under a single agency all the scientific and technology organisations then under the Ministry. A new entity had to be created, and with it, a shared purpose and common corporate identity.

New structure and processes were needed. It could not be business as usual with the only difference being a new letterhead. Instead, we set out to establish clear organising principles that would give meaning to the structure and process. We wanted an Agency that would be dynamic, flexible, and responsive to changing conditions. It should focus on results. It should be nimble.

This is now possible. The Agency now works within a statutory board framework and is free to manage its own affairs, within the broad guidelines established by the Ministry.

One central principle is the focus on the customers. They are the three Services of the SAF, the Joint Staff and the Ministry. Arising from this principle, the Agency aligns itself internally so that its structure and process encourage accountability and ownership at the lowest possible level.

Activities are organised around programmes. The programme managers are the "front line managers". They answer to the customers directly and are accountable for the programme implementation. They are given authority over budget and resource so that they can be more responsive. We are empowering our programme managers who are closest to the customers. We have created a structure and process in which the priority is more horizontal to the customers than vertically within the Agency. This is a major change.

The Agency will have a new approach to managing people. It will be an organisation that encourages learning and growth. Top managers will facilitate and support the individual's entrepreneurial initiatives and ensure his employability through life-long learning. The empowered individual in turn assumes responsibility to make the Agency a high-performance and entrepreneurial organisation. We want to shift from a life-time employment in the organisation to life-long learning for employability of the individual anywhere.

The official launch of the DSTA today is the beginning of a journey. We have entered a new phase. Changes are a fact of life. To stay relevant, DSTA will have to be on its toes and adjust itself to new conditions. The operating environment now has become more complex. But I am confident that DSTA will rise up to the challenges in the years ahead.

Thank you.

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