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**OPENING ADDRESS BY PRIME MINISTER MR GOH CHOK TONG**

**AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF TUAS NAVAL BASE**

**ON FRIDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 1994, AT 6.45 PM**

One important advantage that we have over many others is our capacity to think and plan long term. In many countries, this is not possible because of frequent changes of government. “Musical-chair” governments are more preoccupied with the next election than the next generation.

Long-term planning enables us to map out the journey while effective implementation makes sure that we arrive at the planned destination. This requires vision, judgement and much skill because the external environment does not remain static; neither does it change predictably like the seasons. Amidst this changing and often unpredictable environment, we must be quick to anticipate problems and seize opportunities. It helps to have a good over-the-horizon radar. Our radar-like approach to problems has enabled Singapore to overcome great odds to become the affluent country it is today. When Singaporeans are pre-

occupied with COEs, Weekend cars and upgrading their HDB homes, we cannot be doing so badly. At the national leadership level, we will hone this skill of looking over the horizon.

Likewise, the Singapore Armed Forces must be skillful in forward planning to defend our nation and safeguard our achievements.

The development of Tuas Naval Base shows that the Republic of Singapore Navy has this skill.

The need to find alternatives to Pulau Brani Naval Base was recognised twelve year ago. Expansion on Pulau Brani was not possible as the land there was reserved for PSA to develop container facilities. It was then decided that two new Naval Bases would be built to replace Pulau Brani Naval Base: one at Tuas and another at Changi on land yet to be reclaimed.

Even as we witness the official opening of Tuas Naval Base today, RSN has already started to plan for the new naval base at Changi. Shore infrastructure must keep pace with the expansion of the fleet, and acquisition of advance weapons and electronic equipment.

Decisions to meet long-term needs are naturally not without risk as they have to predict the future. If a wrong decision is made, the mistake cannot be easily rectified. But not to make a decision for fear of making a mistake is almost certainly wrong.

We can reduce the risk of making mistakes by making sure that we have the right people in command and the various positions of leadership. We must be able to attract the right talent, nurture and motivate them. To do so, we must continually assess and adjust recruitment schemes and reward talent handsomely. More importantly, our people must derive challenge and satisfaction from their jobs, and be recognised for their dedication and outstanding service.

Only then, will RSN have good leaders with the vision to fulfil its heavy responsibility. Your past track record gives me confidence.

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Starting from two ships and a handful of men, RSN is today a professional force ready to defend Singapore shoulder to shoulder with the Army and the Air Force. Singapore Navy ships now exercise regularly without friends not only in the South China Sea and Java Sea, but also further afield in Australia, in the Indian Ocean and from time to time even in the Western Pacific.

On this auspicious occasion, I congratulate Mindef's Defence Technology Group and the Navy on your successful completion of the Tuas Naval Base. To the men and women who will serve in Tuas, your new Base is not just a physical collection of buildings and wharves. It is an organisation of people with operational, engineering, supply and administration capabilities. It is you, the people, who will make the Tuas Naval Base outstanding, and the RSN's Fleet fighting fit.

It is your foresight, heart and spirit that will decide the reputation of Tuas Naval Base.

I now take great pride in declaring Tuas Naval Base open.

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