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SPEECH BY DR TONY TAN KENG YAM, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND
MINISTER FOR DEFENCE AT THE LAUNCHING OF THE BOOK 'THE NTU STORY'
HELD ON MONDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 1995 AT 4.00 PM AT THE NANYANG
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY MAIN FUNCTION THEATRE

It is a great pleasure for me to be present this afternoon
to launch the book "The NTU Story" which chronicles the
development of NTU from its beginning to its present status.

NTU began as a response to fill a need.
In July 1980, the Council on Professional and Technical Education
(CPTE) identified the need to increase significantly the number
of engineers working in Singapore if our economic restructuring
programme to shift Singapore's economy to more high-technology,
high value-added activities were to be successful.

To meet this need, the Council proposed the establishment
of a new institute, to be called the Nanyang Technological
Institute, to educate practice-oriented engineers to man our
companies and other economic sectors.

Cabinet approved the proposal for a new engineering institute and
a Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr Cham Tao Soon, who was
then the NUS Dean of Engineering was set up to draw up the Master
Plan for the establishment of Nanyang Technological Institute.
By November 1980, the Master Plan was ready and in July 1981, the
Institute was established with Mr Michael Fam as the first
Chairman of the NTI Council and Dr Cham Tao Soon as its first
President.

Much work had to be done in the years 1980 to 1982 to recruit
staff, renovate the buildings of the former Nanyang University
at Jurong, work out plans for a new academic complex and finalise
the preparations for the admission of NTI's first students in
July 1982.

NTI's development can be divided into three phases:

- . Phase I (1980 to 1986) - concentration on developing undergraduate education in engineering.
- . Phase II (1986 to 1995) - addition of faculties, and expansion of postgraduate education and research.
- . The third phase is where we are today.

Phase I

In the first phase of its development, NTU or NTI as it was then called, concentrated on establishing strong undergraduate programmes in the three Schools of Engineering.

The main aim at that time was to ensure that these programmes were of high standards and that the graduates would be able to meet the rigorous demands to qualify for certification by the various professional boards.

In April 1985, NTI graduated its first students, 557 graduates who were awarded NUS Bachelor of Engineering degrees.

It was not an auspicious time for these students to graduate as Singapore was then undergoing an economic recession and the fear of graduate unemployment was a serious concern for the Institute.

This fear was eased when the 1985 Graduate Employment Survey showed that the majority of NTI graduates have been able to find employment in the private sector at salaries which were competitive or sometimes even higher than salaries of NUS graduates in equivalent disciplines.

Phase II

The second phase of NTU's development was concerned with the enormous task of moving into the new academic complex at Jurong from the renovated buildings of the former Nanyang University. New faculties were added and postgraduate education and research were expanded.

The Accountancy School at NUS was transferred to NTI in 1987 to form the basis for a new School of Accountancy and Commerce. The School of Applied Science was established in 1988, and the School of Accountancy and Commerce was renamed the School of Accountancy

and Business.

In 1990, education was added to NTU's faculties with the Government's acceptance of the recommendation of Lord Dainton that the Institute of Education should be merged with the College of Physical Education to form a new National Institute of Education which should be a part of NTU.

Addition of University courses was completed with the establishment of the School of Communications Studies in 1992.

On the research and development front, NTI established the Grumman International NTI-CAD/CAM centre or GINTIC in 1985 and this was followed by the establishment of the Entrepreneurship Development Centre in 1988 and the Centre for Advanced Construction Studies in 1989.

The Institute of Manufacturing Technology was established in 1990 and was linked to the Fraunhofer Institute of Manufacturing Engineering and Automation in West Germany.

A major step to strengthen postgraduate teaching and research in business management was taken with the signing of a formal collaboration agreement between NTI School of Accountancy and Business and MIT-Sloan School of Management in 1990.

All these developments culminated in the formal inauguration of NTU as a University by the Prime Minister, Mr Goh Chok Tong, on the 30th June 1991.

Phase III

NTU is today an established university grounded in technology and business and with a full range of faculties in engineering, applied science, accountancy and business, communication studies, arts and science, and education.

NTU is now ready to embark on its third phase of its development and take advantage of its strong foundation to help Singapore move up the technology ladder and assist our companies to spread their wings in the region.

To do this, NTU needs to continue to focus on those disciplines that are of relevance to our economy.

As a developed country, Singapore can no longer compete on low cost.

We need to distinguish ourselves by the high quality of the products and services that we offer.

Our people must be able to absorb and adapt to new technology and new skills, develop new products and new processes, and be creative.

These are areas of competence in which NTU is strong.

NTU should preserve its practice-oriented tradition and continue to emphasise technology and business.

In line with the Government's drive to regionalise our economy, NTU should extend its regional and international presence by collaborating with world-class universities in the region and beyond.

In this connection, the establishment of the Nanyang Business School, the successor to the School of Accountancy and Business, opens up a new vista for the provision of business education. This will be in high demand as the emerging economies in Asia open up and pursue free market development.

NTU has made a good start in providing business management courses and construction management training to participants from China.

Plans are in hand to extend the range of courses to cover hospitality and tourism management.

As a further step, NTU could open the courses to participants from other countries in the region to support Singapore's regionalisation drive.

A key problem facing our companies going regional is the lack of trained managers to undertake the many regionalisation projects overseas.

Each time we build an industrial park, a power plant or a hotel, we need a host of engineers, architects, managers and technical staff.

As the University of industry and business, NTU can play a critical role in ensuring the success of our regionalisation

drive by training a large number of such graduates to help fill the urgent need in the region.

To do this successfully, NTU must take into account the diversity of languages and cultures when planning its curricula and courses.

Conclusion

The first two phases of NTU's development saw the transformation of NTU from a mere plan on paper to the thriving well-respected institution NTU is today.

If NTU pursues the third phase of its development with the same vigour, dare and vision as in its first two phases, I am confident that NTU will succeed in its mission to become the premier technological university in the region or, in short, the MIT of Southeast and East Asia.

On this note, I have great pleasure in launching "The NTU Story" and I congratulate the author, Mrs Lu Sinclair, and all those who have been involved in the development of NTU and the production of this fine book.
