

SPEECH BY MR CHAI CHONG HII, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION, AT THE OPENING OF SCIENCE FAIR 1976 AT THE HWA CHONG JUNIOR COLLEGE ON 27 AUGUST 1976 AT 10 A.M.

I am happy to be with you this morning at the Opening of the fourth Science Fair for schools because I like to see meaningful models or teaching aids made by our schools, especially if they are the products of our pupils.

2           The Science Teachers Association of Singapore was formed ten years ago. It has contributed significantly towards improving the standard of science teaching in our schools. Of the many contributions made by the Association, the Science Fair deserves special mention because it has provided the necessary opportunities and incentives to the students and teachers to undertake some scientific research.

3           We are living in an era of spectacular advancements in science and are reaping the harvests of the many achievements of persevering scientists, past and present. The colour TV set in your home, the significant advances made in molecular biology, the successful manned landings on the moon and the recent soft-landing on the planet Mars by an unmanned spacecraft capable of carrying out intricate experiments and relaying scientific information and clear colour pictures of the Martian surface, are but a few examples of the marvels of modern science.

4           I understand that each project work for this Science Fair involves a good deal of independent research and wide reading on the part of the student-participant. In addition he has to present his findings in the form of a detailed

written report, illustrated with graphs, charts and diagrams. The intelligent and skilful display of the materials and apparatus used in the project also forms part of the presentation. This is good training in the study of science, even if you do not win a prize this morning. The satisfaction derived from doing something with your own hands must, in itself, be very rewarding indeed.

5           The rote learning of facts and the mere acquisition of manipulative skills to handle standard laboratory apparatus by repeating traditional experiments and those required in examinations often make the learning of science uninteresting and tedious. The quality of learning is enhanced when students carry out their own investigations and experience the fascination of experimentation and discovery for themselves.

6           Although we have sophisticated equipment in our laboratories, many scientific concepts are more effectively illustrated by simple, improvised pieces of apparatus designed and made by the student or the teacher. Throughout the history of science education, one sees many examples of how simple scientific models have been very effective in demonstrating difficult concept. It is from such simple models that the more intricate and expensive pieces of apparatus are developed later.

7           I am informed that there are 119 projects on display here this morning. They are submitted by 28 secondary schools and junior colleges involving many students. I hope that more students from our schools would get involved in project work in future years. And now, it gives me great pleasure to declare this Science Fair 76 open.