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cc: (bcc: Jeannie LEE/MTI/SINGOV)
Subject: Speech by Dr Richard Hu, 8 May 99, 10.30am

Singapore Government PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY DR RICHARD HU, MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND MP FOR
KRETA AYER-TANGLIN GRC AT THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY OF
THE 108TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE SINGAPORE THONG
CHAI MEDICAL INSTITUTION ON 8 MAY 99 AT 10.30 AM AT 50 CHIN
SWEE ROAD THONG CHAI BUILDING**

Mr Tan Tock San,
Chairman of the Singapore Thong Chai Medical Institution

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honoured to be invited to tour your Institution and its facilities and to witness the inauguration ceremony this morning. The Thong Chai Medical Institution was first established by a group of immigrants from China in 1867. Over the past 132

years your Institution has provided free consultations and herbal treatment to patients from all walks of life, irrespective of race and religion. Your charitable acts have brought Thong Chai Medical Institution considerable renown in Singapore. Even the old colonial government appreciated your substantial contributions to Singapore and provided land to enable you to set up proper premises to attend to the poor and needy. In recognition of your Institution's place in Singapore's history, the old Thong Chai building at Wayang Street has been conserved by the Government and gazetted as a heritage building.

2 I am glad to learn that your Institution is keeping pace with advances in technology with the computerisation of patient registration. Your physicians are also using computers to provide faster and more efficient service to your patients. You have also sent your physicians on scholarships to China for further studies and upgraded your general treatment with the setting up of several specialised departments. You have also been very supportive of the Government's effort to register all eligible physicians, to introduce proper standards of training and education, and to upgrade the use and regulation of Chinese medicine in Singapore.

3 Chinese medicine has been in existence for thousands of years and many people still rely on Chinese medical treatment. Although the use of herbs and Chinese medical procedures may not be fully accepted internationally, its acupuncture treatment has recently gained world wide recognition. I hope that with more research, other areas of Chinese medicine can be developed and exploited to benefit medical science as a whole.

4 I understand that much of your benevolent activities are financed by very generous donations from the public. These donations have helped the Institution to upgrade its training and facilities and to continue to provide free consultation and treatment to patients. I am also happy to note that your Executive Members come from

a wide cross section of our community. They include well-known businessmen, bankers, educationalists, physicians, and social workers. I wish all of you will have a fruitful and successful term of office.

5 Finally, I wish the Institution every success in promoting Chinese medicine to greater heights and in its continued contribution to help the poor and needy in Singapore.
